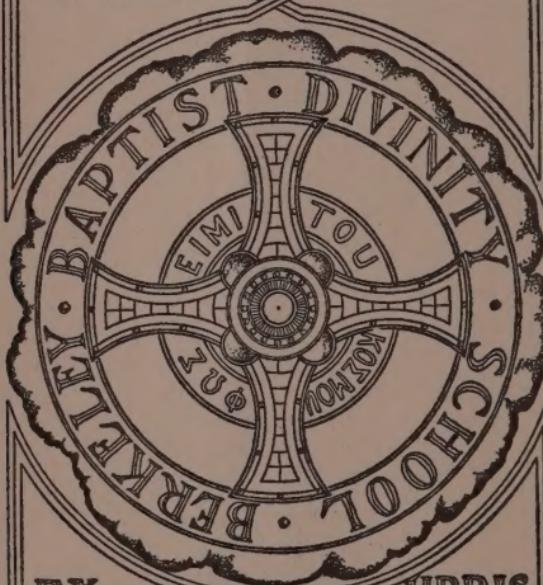


JESUS AND THE PROBLEMS OF LIFE

SIDNEY A. WESTON

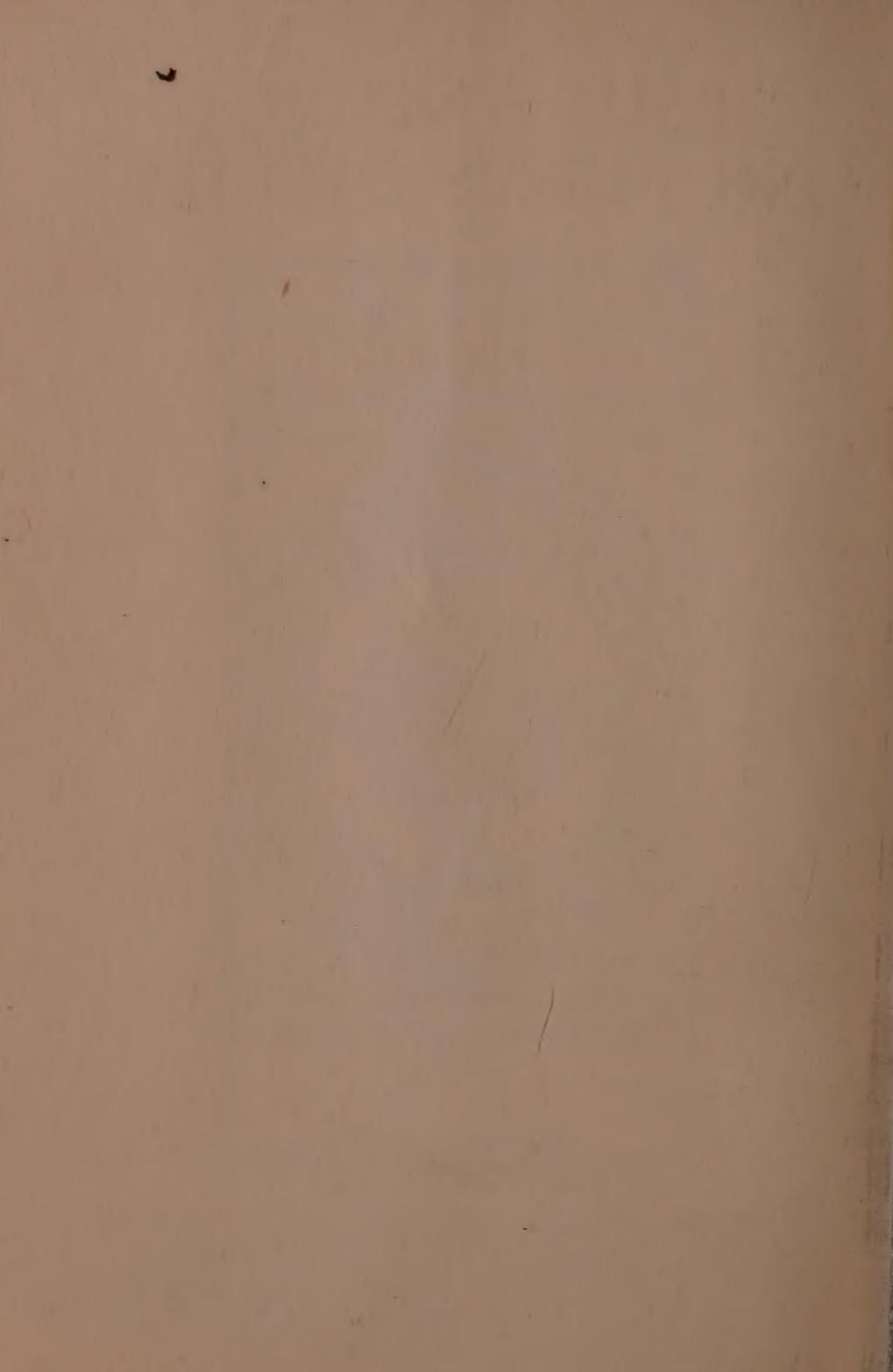
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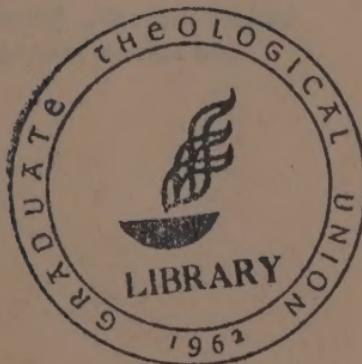
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JESUS AND THE PROBLEMS OF LIFE

SIDNEY A. WESTON



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*To the Young People
Who for Twenty Years have been Friends
and Inspiration to Me*

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A PERSONAL WORD

This is a problem discussion course of study. It is based on my experience that discussion clarifies knowledge but does not generate it, and that no discussion is fruitful without an adequate background of knowledge.

I have tried to furnish suitable background material, to suggest vital questions which young people are facing today, and also to outline ways in which they themselves are trying to solve these problems. The lessons have grown out of my experience with various groups of young people with whom I have used this material. No teacher's book is required.

SIDNEY A. WESTON.

I

THE INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENT ON A LIFE

The World in Which Jesus Lived

STUDY—*Matthew 22: 15-40; 23: 13-39; Luke 2: 1-4; 3: 1, 2;
Luke 1: 67-79.*

As You Begin These Lessons

Try to see Jesus as he lived and worked so many years ago. This is not easy to do, but it can be done if you will study the Bible passages over and over, and use your imagination to fill in what is suggested. Begin this study as if you had never before heard of him. Make up your mind you are going to know the real Jesus, to understand his problems and ways of meeting them, and to find what he has to say today to us who face real problems in daily living. In each lesson you will note that you are asked to find certain facts. Then there is a problem for you to solve and discuss in the class. A few questions for class consideration aim to make you think through the problem and find a way to meet it.

Use your Bibles. Keep a notebook. In it write your facts and record your thoughts and observations. In this way your work week by week will come to have a permanent value. It will also be very interesting to compare what you said of Jesus today with what you think of him at the conclusion of this study.

The Record of Jesus' Life and Work

The story of Jesus' life is very brief. Only a few incidents of his birth and boyhood remain. Then there is a gap of eighteen years until he began his public work at thirty years of age. This record is found in the four Gospels: Mark, Luke, Matthew, and John.

The Gospel of Mark takes its name from John Mark, who was associated with Peter. (*See I Peter 5: 13.*) This is the earliest gospel and was written about A. D. 70. It was written in Greek for Gentile Christians. It aims to tell of Jesus' deeds, his work, his power, his authority. Mark is a gospel of action; it is graphic and has much local color.

The Gospel of Luke was written by Luke, who was called "the beloved physician." (*See Colossians 4: 14.*) He was also the author of the book of Acts and was a companion of Paul. He was a Gentile and a member of the church at Antioch in Syria. This gospel was written the latter part of the first century. Luke based it on the gospels already written, especially that of Mark. The keynote is found in *Luke 19: 10*, "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." It shows Jesus' work among the poor and outcast. This gospel contains the story of the infancy and youth of Jesus.

The Gospel of Matthew was written about the same time as that of the Gospel of Luke. It was written for the Jewish Christians. It is the gospel of the kingdom and how Jesus established it, and shows the fulfillment of prophecy in Jesus' life. In many ways this is the most complete and adequate gospel. The topical arrangement as found in the Sermon on the Mount is very valuable. Matthew's Gospel follows for the most part Mark's chronology.

The Gospel of John was written about the end of the first century or the beginning of the second. It shows the influence of Greek ideas. The aim of this gospel is to present Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. (*See John 20: 31.*) John made some use of earlier gospels but had also other sources. It is not a historical picture of the life of Jesus but rather the interpretation of his life.

What Difference Does It Make Where You Live?

Some of you who study these lessons live in the country; others in the city. Does where you live make any differ-

ence in your life? Do you feel limited in the country? Do you think a city a help or a hindrance to you?

If you are in the country you are close to nature. There are open fields and woods, the birds and animals. In a country town you know everyone, and everyone knows you. You have more in common than in the city. Often isolated in the winter or by distance from one house to another you are thrown on your own resources.

In the city there are no neighbors. People who live in flats often do not know who lives above or below them. Life is more artificial. It is farther from nature. There are rush and hurry and jam, but with it all there are more things to go to that are worth while: fine libraries, museums, concerts, entertainments, lectures, etc.

Both country and city have advantages and disadvantages and it depends largely upon the person what life in either place shall mean to him. Many of our greatest men and women have come from the country; others, as Theodore Roosevelt, have grown up in the city.

All of you, whether in country or in city, live in America. Would it make any difference to you if you lived in China, or Japan, or India? Think of the difference in the government, in the customs and habits of the people, and in the religious ideas of these countries. Here you live in a democracy in which every citizen of age has equal rights with every other. It is, as Lincoln said, a government of the people, by the people, for the people. In few other countries are the people so largely their own rulers as here. What opportunities and responsibilities does this bring to everyone who lives here? In what other ways does living in a free country influence us? What is the difference between living in our country and living two thousand years ago in the country where Jesus grew up?

The Country in Which Jesus Was Born

Luke 2: 14; Luke 3: 1, 2.

Jesus was not born in a free country like ours. For cen-

turies his people had been subject to some foreign power; Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and finally Rome had been successively the rulers of the proud and independence-loving Jews. Naturally, feeling ran strong against such a condition and sometimes broke out into open insurrection which was speedily crushed by the all-powerful Rome.

Imagine the feelings of patriotic Jews who used to stand by the wall of Jerusalem and bewail the lost glory of their nation. That such a feeling could persist through centuries of subjugation shows how intensely the Jews loved their nation and how bitterly they chafed under the rule of a foreign power. It was in such conditions that Jesus began his life in Judea and Galilee.

The country we call Palestine is only about 140 miles long and 40 miles wide, not as long as the distance from Boston to New Haven, and only as wide as the distance from Boston to Providence; it extends from Dan to Beersheba and beyond the Jordan. It is about the size of the State of Vermont. Its climate is varied. There are the heat and whirlwinds of the desert, and snow, hail and ice of other parts, but the climate of most of the country is similar to that of Mediterranean lands.

Judea, Samaria, and Galilee were the scene of Jesus' work in Palestine. The capital of Judea was Jerusalem, the center of Jewish religious life and the home of their great temple. Here were the teachers and scholars of the country and to it people came from all parts of the world.

Samaria was the country of the Samaritans, with whom the Jews had no dealings. Its population was of mixed blood and in the eyes of the orthodox Jews the people were social and religious outcasts.

Galilee was the scene of most of Jesus' work. There he grew up in the little town of Nazareth. His townsmen were industrious and thrifty. Good crops and prosperity produced ease and luxury and the love of material things. Through it ran the trade route from Jerusalem to Damas-

cus. On its east was the Sea of Galilee, teeming with fish, the center of a busy and thriving industry.

Into that little country there came the Master who turned the world upside down with his teachings; one man, alone, misunderstood, scorned, persecuted, crucified. This man apparently did not begin his service until he was thirty years old, and it was only two, at the most not over three, years before his enemies had nailed him to the cross.

He left no written record. His words have come down to us only through the lips and writings of his friends and followers. The whole record is smaller than a good sized modern novel. And the life was lived over 1900 years ago. Why has it today such power? Why has its message spread beyond that little country out into every region of the world? Why have his followers increased from a handful of humble and despised men and women until they now number millions, and rulers and those mighty in power are proud to call him King?

Historical and Political Conditions

Luke 3: 2.

The Greek conquests under Alexander the Great had carried Grecian civilization into Palestine, and this remained even after Rome became the mistress of the world. At the time of Jesus, Rome had ruled his country for nearly a century. Her power was despotic but she gave much freedom and authority to the Jewish magistrates and courts.

Judea and Samaria made one province under a Roman procurator or governor. Galilee constituted another under the rule of Herod Antipas (the son of Herod the Great). In spite of Rome's tolerance and justice, however, the Jews were against the government. Anyone who advocated submission to it was "unpatriotic." The Jew was an isolationist. He wanted to live in a world of his own. Nevertheless Greek culture and Roman rule were powerful influences in the world of Jesus' day.

The Language of Jesus' Country

As a Jew, Jesus spoke Aramaic, a form of Hebrew language used in everyday speech. Latin was used only in official documents and even then was always accompanied by the Greek and Aramaic translations. Thus the inscription which Pilate put on the cross of Jesus was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek (*see John 19: 19, 20*). The Greek influence prevailed in the social life and in the trades and the customs of Jesus' country, while the Roman influence was the strongest in the government and administration of the provinces. So while the people spoke in Aramaic and the official documents were written in Latin, the language of Rome, the scholars wrote in Greek. All of the four Gospels, for example, were written in the Greek language although they are the story of the life of a Jew. In quoting Jesus the Gospels have occasionally given the Aramaic words, as when he spoke to the maiden who was ill and lifted her by the hand, saying "Talitha cumi" (*Mark 5: 41*). Another example is in Jesus' words on the cross, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani" (*Matt. 27: 46; Mark 15: 34*).

The Pharisees and Sadducees

Matt. 22: 15-40.

Throughout the gospel story the leaders of these two parties appear in conflict with Jesus.

The Pharisees were zealous for strict obedience to the Mosaic Law and all the minute interpretations which they had given to it. They had a strong hold on the people, who looked to them as guardians of the Sacred Law. In their zeal for the law, unfortunately, they surrounded it with trivial exactions which made it a burden and not a help. It was this class of religious leaders whom Jesus denounced so fiercely, calling them hypocrites, blind guides, and whited sepulchres (*Matt. 23: 13-36*).

The Sadducees were the aristocratic party of the time. They controlled the politics of their nation, and believed

in making it strong through the cultivation of political power and wealth. They were more concerned with the prosperity of the State than with its religious condition.

The Messianic Hope of the Jews

Luke 1:67-79.

Through the long night of their submission to foreign rule there glowed in every Jewish heart the hope of the Messiah, the Deliverer, who would come and set up his kingdom in Jerusalem. Some expected this Messiah to be a national king who would establish his power over the other nations and free the Jews from the power of their enemies. Others looked for a spiritual Messiah, not a worldly king, but one who should deliver them from their sins and overcome the wickedness of the world. These were the choice spirits of the Jews and their ideals Jesus shared and fulfilled. But the dominant hope among the Jews was for a powerful deliverer who should free them from bondage and crush their oppressors. These conflicting hopes and ideals continually appear in the story of Jesus' life and work. They formed the background for one of his most difficult life problems as we shall see in later lessons.

Questions for Class Discussion

1. Compare the world in which Jesus lived with that which we know today. What countries have been discovered since he lived on earth?
2. While a larger world has been discovered, its parts have been brought closer together. Name some of the ways in which this has been accomplished.
3. Today our President speaks into the microphone and in a flash his words are heard around the world. Suppose Jesus could have done this. What might have been the result? What is gained by the radio as a means of communication? What is lost?

4. Today Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Palestine would be in the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* within a few hours of its delivery. What other means of communication do we now have that he lacked? Why do you suppose that he left no written record of his life and teachings?
5. Picture the conditions of life in his time and compare them with conditions here today. What improvements do you see?
6. Why has a life that was lived in such a small place become a world influence?
7. Which is the stronger influence in a life, heredity or environment? Why do you think so?

To Think Over Through the Week

What difference does it make whether you are an only child or the oldest in a large family? What would be the influence on a boy of a town like Nazareth? What kind of boy do you picture Jesus to have been? Do you think you would have liked him for a chum?

II

LAYING LIFE FOUNDATIONS

Jesus' Home and Heritage

To Study in Advance

Mark 3:21, 31-35; 6:1-6; Luke 2:39-52; 4:16; Luke 1:46-55; 3:23-38; John 14:6; 7:1-5.

Find the Following Facts

How many people were there in Jesus' family? (*Mark 6:1-6.*)

Who were they? (*Mark 6:1-6.*)

What kind of home was it?

The father's occupation.

The character of Mary. (*Luke 1: 26-56.*)

The character of Joseph. (*Matt. 1: 19.*)

What was his home town? (*Luke 4:16; John 1:46.*)

What are the advantages and disadvantages of a small town to grow up in?

Problem

Imagine yourself a girl or boy of Jesus' age in Nazareth, writing a letter to a friend down in Jerusalem, telling him about your friend Jesus.

What would you write about him, after reading the Bible passages given at the head of this lesson? What would you say his companions thought of him? How did he look? How did he act as a boy? What was his disposition? His occupation? His ability? Was he popular or not? Was he different from the other boys of the village? Was he reserved and quiet, or did he play with the others?

Jesus' Home*Mark 6: 1-6.*

There were four brothers, at least two sisters, possibly more, in the family of Jesus, making nine all together. And of these children, Jesus was the oldest. Try to picture that home in Nazareth. The oldest son (the first born) held a position of special favor in a Jewish home even today in our home there is often a special tie that binds the oldest child to his parents. Certainly he has more responsibilities than the other brothers and sisters. His parents depend upon him to look out for the other children. The others look to him to help them with the toys and games and studies. If he is selfish and inconsiderate what kind of home life do they have? If he is kind and thoughtful what kind of a brother does he make? It is not an easy place to fill,—do you think it is hard for a boy than for a girl to be the oldest in the family? Why?

Jesus' home was genuinely religious. The mother Mary, was a rare spirit. Joseph, the father, must have been an unusual man,—first to have won such a wonderful woman to be his wife, and second for the influence he seems to have left upon Jesus. Remember that the favorite and usual term Jesus used for God was "Father" and the word always carried with it a tenderness, a feeling, sympathy, understanding, wisdom, justice, kindness. The father in that home was such a character that Jesus naturally thought of God as the Father of a family. While we give Mary her high place, it is time we recognized the influence of Joseph on the oldest boy among seven children. That fatherly care Jesus enjoyed for at least twelve years and probably more. Doubtless Joseph taught him the carpenter trade, and helped him with a hammer and mallet and chisel. Can you not see how proud he was when he made his first little box? What a help he was in that home! What wonders in nature he must

have showed his brothers and sisters in their walks and picnics on the hills of Nazareth!

Early in Jesus' life, like every Jewish child, he was taught by his mother the stories of Israel's heroes, many of whom fought on the great battle-ground of Esdraelon, plainly visible from the hills around Nazareth. He learned the *Shema* or Jewish ritual. He listened to and learned the prayers and daily readings from the Jewish Bible, our Old Testament. Before and after each meal he heard his father offer prayer. At the door of his house was a metal box containing the opening words of the *Shema*, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God," etc. Jesus would see and touch it every time he entered or left the house. All these with the festivals and ceremonies observed in the home made a deep impression on a Jewish child. Jesus' home was one of plain living and high thinking. The clothing and food were those of the humble people of the village. Everything about the home, however, expressed an atmosphere of love and happiness.

His Education

The Jews believe in educating their children, and Jesus' parents were no exception. His earliest teacher was his mother, and the first thing he learned was the *Shema* or the creed of Israel (see *Deuteronomy* 6:4-9; 7:7; 11: 13-21; *Numbers* 15: 37-41), which every good Jew repeated every morning and night. As he grew older he was taught to write the words of the *Shema* and understand its meaning. Just as you began to go to school when you were six years old, so Jesus was sent to the synagogue school at that age. There he learned to read and write, and to study the sacred Hebrew Law. The children sat on the floor Turkish fashion with the teacher in the middle. Jesus talked Aramaic but he was also taught to read Hebrew and probably Greek. His story book was the Old Testament with its thrilling stories of the mighty deeds of the leaders and heroes of the past. He

learned a little arithmetic, enough for everyday needs, but his education was chiefly in the Hebrew religion.

Like the boys in America in the days of the Pilgrims, the Jewish boy had few games, and athletics were foreign and forbidden. Little children doubtless played "make-believe." Loving nature as Jesus did, however, and living in Nazareth, he got his recreation in climbing the hills, and perhaps following the caravans as they journeyed through the town.

Home, the synagogue school, the carpenter shop, the hilltops of his native town, the stories brought by traders from distant countries, the village talk, his own reading and thinking,—these are the sources of Jesus' education as a boy. How does it compare with that of boys and girls of his age today?

Nazareth — Where Jesus Grew Up

Find Nazareth on your map. About how far was it from the Sea of Galilee? How far from the Mediterranean Sea? How far from the plain of Esdraelon? (Use the scale of miles and measure these distances.)

The town was in the hollow and on the side of a cup near the foot of Mount Tabor. It was near the main routes of travel yet secluded by the hills, from the top of which could be seen the plain of Esdraelon, the field of many a historic battle. To the west twenty miles away was the Mediterranean Sea. To the south lay the plateau of Gilboa where Saul fought his last battle. Not far away ran the main caravan route from Egypt to Babylonia; think what wonderful things a wide-awake boy would learn from those "overland limiteds." In such a situation a boy would learn the news of the world. He would hear what people were doing way off in Egypt. He would learn the latest news from the north. The roads were good and travel was usually safe under Roman rule.

Doubtless Jesus spent many hours on these hills around

Nazareth. Certainly as a man he was in the habit of withdrawing "to a mountain" for thought and prayer, and he probably formed this habit as a boy. Nazareth was a good place to grow up in, even if Nathanael wondered how any good thing could come out of it. For it was just enough removed from the great highways to keep it from being spoiled, and just near enough to keep in touch with the ideas and events of the world at large. It was not a city, but a village or town in which Jesus could know his neighbors and learn their daily struggles and pleasures, their hopes and disappointments and aspirations.

There he lived in a house of stone, close by other houses of the same material and structure. The furniture would be scanty: a box, water jars, some cushions and a chest. Narrow, crooked streets separated the houses, and outside the village was the well or fountain to which the women came with their jars for water. Around the town on the hillsides were vineyards, gardens and olive trees. Had it not been for the taxes levied by the Romans and the tithes payable to the synagogues the people would have been in good circumstances; but these kept many of them poor. It is easy to see what a variety of conditions of life Jesus would daily meet in such a town, what small talk he would hear, what larger affairs would be discussed, and when he withdrew to the hills what a wealth of historic associations and beautiful nature he would find.

Other Influences in Jesus' Life

What people are thinking and talking about where you live influences you in one way or another, and gives a "set" to your own thinking. Today, for example, there is much said about prohibition and about war and peace. So we like to know, not only the kind of place in which Jesus grew up, but what were the chief topics of conversation in the town and nation in the days of Jesus' boyhood.

Those were times of unrest. Rome ruled the Jewish

nation without her consent, and underneath the apparent peace there were discontent and opposition. Tribute to Rome was one topic which Jesus must have heard much about, for taxes are now and always have been very close to a people's thought. They touch them at their sensitive spot, the pocketbook.

Another topic which he often heard discussed in his home, in the synagogue, and among the neighbors, was the Messiah. Oppressed by Roman rule they yearned for a deliverer, the one promised by the prophets of old; and every Jewish woman hoped some day to be the mother of the Messiah. Doubtless Mary herself cherished this hope.

The religion which the Jewish priests and scribes taught was far from satisfying. It had become too much a performance of forms and ceremonies. The shell was there but the life and spirit were gone. These things Jesus heard and saw for himself, and it is not surprising, therefore, to find him later denouncing these religious leaders in uncompromising terms.

Taxes, the Roman rule, the Messiah to come, the need for a reform in the religious life of the time,—these topics rose above the small talk of the village. Jesus heard them discussed. He thought about them himself. Later he said and did what he had decided was right to do with those problems. To the Sadducees' question, he told them to pay tribute to Caesar. Of the religious leaders he demanded godly lives. And the Messiah he interpreted as a spiritual deliverer and announced that he was the One for whom they looked. Keep these facts in mind as you study his life further in the next lessons. They are conflicting forces that crossed and recrossed his life and ministry.

The Boyhood of Lincoln and Roosevelt

Here are two of America's greatest leaders; one raised in the country, the other in the city.

Lincoln grew up in the pioneer sections of Kentucky and Indiana, far from the city but close to nature. His

family were very poor, and work on the farm was long and hard. He had only a year's schooling but educated himself by reading and study in spite of the obstacles and handicaps. There was no luxury and few comforts in his home.

In some ways Lincoln's boyhood reminds us of that of Jesus. In both homes life was simple and honest with plenty of hard work. Jesus' house was small; Lincoln's home was a cabin. In both homes there were several other children. Both boys loved nature and lived close to it. Both boys loved people and were fond of talking with them. Lincoln was a great story-teller. So was Jesus; the Gospels are rich in his wonderful stories or parables. Both boys were influenced by their contacts with the world of nature and the lives of men and women.

In marked contrast to Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt spent his boyhood in the busy, rushing city of New York. He was weak and sickly as a child, but early he resolved to overcome those handicaps and become a strong man.

Like Lincoln, he loved people and he loved nature and he made the most of his summers in the country to learn all he could about it. The big city, however, gave him little chance to know people as Lincoln and Jesus could, and since he had no schoolmates he was handicapped still further. But he had courage and perseverance, and slowly, through faithful and continual training, he conquered his weakness and became a strong, vigorous man.

Roosevelt's life is a good illustration of how a man can overcome the handicaps of his boyhood's physical weakness. Lincoln's life shows how a man may overcome the limitations of poverty and ignorance. Both lives suggest what anyone may do and be if he will.

For Class Discussion

1. Describe a day in Jesus' life as a boy in his home at Nazareth. Picture him in his activities at home and around the town. How does it compare with the life of a boy today?

2. What do you think is most needed to make a man a leader today; physical strength, a brilliant mind, a good character, popularity, personality? Which of these would you place first?
3. Lincoln rose from log cabin to White House. How did he do it?
4. Jesus was of humble origin and has become one of the world's greatest religious leaders. When he was crucified, even his friends thought his life a failure. What has made his life the power it is today?
5. What can one learn from nature? Why do you suppose Jesus loved to get away into the hills and mountains?
6. What effect do brothers and sisters have on a boy or girl? Give your idea of the kind of brother Jesus was.
7. What can the town you live in do for you? What can you do for the town you live in?

To Think About This Week

What can you do when you are sixteen years old that you cannot do when you are sixty? How much that you can do at sixty depends on what you are at sixteen?

III

FINDING THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE IN LIFE

Jesus at the Threshold of Youth

To Study in Advance

Luke 2:40; 2:41-51; 2:52.

Find the Following Facts

What kind of boy Jesus was. (*Luke 2:40.*)

How old he was when he went to the Passover at Jerusalem. (*Luke 2:41-42.*)

What was the Passover?

The impression Jesus made on the teachers in the temple. (*Luke 2:46, 47.*)

Why Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem after his parents left.

What his parents thought of him. (*Luke 2:48-51.*)

The kind of foundation he laid for his later life. (*Luke 2:52.*)

Problems

(1) The Young Men's Christian Association has for its symbol a triangle with a circle around it. This triangle has equal sides, and each of the three points touches the circle at equal distances from the others. One side of the triangle stands for the body (the physical); another side for the mind (the mental); another side for the spirit (the religious); the circle represents the social relationships. The whole is a symbol of "the fourfold life" and is based on the story of Jesus' boyhood. (*Luke 2:52.*)

Draw an equilateral triangle. Now draw another triangle with one side shorter than the other two sides. What shape is the triangle? Is it symmetrical or not?

Draw another triangle in which each side is of different length from the others. How does it look? Is it symmetrical or lopsided?

Let the sides of the triangle represent the physical,

mental and religious sides of yourself. If you develop one side and neglect the other two what kind of life results? Suppose you develop the physical and mental and neglect the religious, is the triangle symmetrical or not? Suppose you think you are better than anyone else and have a little clique which doesn't associate with the others, what kind of a circle around the triangle are you making? Will it be a real circle or only a crescent?

(2) Look at a painting by some good artist. Notice what he has in the foreground, and what he keeps in the background. See how the objects in the background are smaller, while the part of the painting which he considers most important has the chief place. Note how each part in the picture has a relationship. If any of the parts are not in the right relationship or if a distant object is larger than one that is near, the picture is spoiled. It is not a good work of art. The artist knows that he must keep the perspective of his picture true or it will be distorted and hideous. So he puts first things first, and subordinates the secondary to those which are most important. In that way he makes a good picture.

Take the fourfold life as a picture. What parts of it would you put in the foreground of your picture? (Think this over carefully; the others in the class may not agree with you.) What would give your life a bad "perspective"? How would you relate all these elements of life so as to make a perfect picture?

Jesus' Childhood and Youth

Luke 2: 40, 51, 52.

Read these verses. They give us a kodak picture of Jesus as a child and as a boy in his teens. Growth, strength, wisdom, the love of God (*verse 40*), characterized his childhood. Development of physical and mental powers, popularity with people, and friendship with God sum up his youth. (*Verse 52.*) Is this the picture of a normal boy or do you think these are unusual qualities to find in a boy?

In this connection read what his countrymen said of him when he visited them after he began his life work. (*See Mark 6: 1-3.*) Apparently he astonished them, and they asked where he got such wisdom and how he could do such mighty works. "Why," they said, "we used to know him as a boy. Didn't he grow up right here in our town? Isn't he the carpenter, and don't we know the rest of the family, the boys and the sisters and his mother?" And they were "offended," angry and jealous of him. Strange, wasn't it? Now think again of what they said and how they acted, and answer this question,—From what his towns-men said about him, should you judge that Jesus as a boy and young man had made *no unusual impression* on his neighbors in Nazareth?

The Passover of the Jews

Luke 2: 41.

This was the great annual religious festival of the Jews at Jerusalem, observed in memory of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. To see how it was celebrated read *Exodus 23: 15; Leviticus 23: 5-8; Numbers 28: 16-25.* It was a seven-day festival, joyous as well as solemn, reminding the people of what God had done for them and what they owed to him. To this festival every good Jew went, and when Jesus was twelve years old his parents took him with them. Renan says that "the pilgrimage (to Jerusalem) was for the Jews a ceremony full of sweetness. Entire series of psalms were consecrated to the singing of the happiness of families journeying thus for several days in the springtime, over the hills and the valleys, having always before them the splendors of Jerusalem, the joy of brothers dwelling together."

When Jesus Was Twelve

Luke 2: 42-50.

Think how Jesus must have felt as he joined the caravan with his parents on the way to the Passover at Jerusalem.

He was a strong, healthy boy. He had read and heard of Jerusalem and its wonderful temple. He had pictured it and dreamed of it in his sleep. And now at last he was to see it and stay in it for a whole week. Other children of his age were going, too, and there would be new scenes and faces, new stories to hear, new wonders to behold. Today our autos cover the distance in a short time, but Jesus went on foot or rode on the back of an ass; a slow journey, but one that gave him plenty of time to see and to think. How he must have been thrilled as nearer and nearer he came to the sacred city!

The temple was, of course, the center of attraction to him. There he heard the teachers explaining things he had often thought about. And so he asked them questions and told them what he thought, so absorbed that he did not know his parents had left for home. Here he was right "in his element." His keen mind drank in everything and still thirsted for more knowledge. It was a wonderful experience for him, and all too short.

By the time his parents had gone a day's journey homeward they missed him and began to search for him,—first among their friends and then back to Jerusalem. One day out, one day in, perhaps another day around the city, and finally in the temple they found him. Note Jesus' answer to their anxious question (*verses 48, 49*). He seems surprised that they had not known where to find him. "Of course I would be here," is his answer. "Didn't you know that my Father's business, the things of God, are my chief interest?"

Just this glimpse of Jesus as a boy and then the curtain drops and we see nothing of him for nearly twenty years. Judging by what you see of him at twelve what kind of man would you expect him to become? How would he be spending the years between twelve and thirty?

Laying Life's Foundations

In some ways the years from twelve to twenty are the

most important time in a person's life. Like Jesus at twelve we also put away our childhood and step into a larger life. We become more independent; we have more liberty. We become stronger in body and develop new powers. Life is richer and fuller and deeper. Sometimes we get all mixed up in our emotions and thoughts. Strong temptations assail us. Great mysteries open to us. We hear God speaking to us. We feel the urge to make life count for the best. We long to do and dare. Nothing is too hard, nothing too dangerous. We are ready to face anything. The world is full of challenge and it is wonderful to be alive in it.

In these years we are laying strong or weak foundations for later life. The Young Men's Christian Association symbolizes them as a fourfold foundation, and though these four really cannot be separated, so closely are they interwoven, yet it helps to think of these sides of life as we check up our lives.

Two ways open—two kinds of foundations are possible; one leads to a life of service, the other to a life of selfishness. One makes a strong building, founded on a rock; the other a weak structure, built on sand.

Think this over and be ready to discuss in class the place you will give in your life to each of these four: (1) the physical, (2) the mental, (3) the social, (4) the religious.

*To every man there openeth
A Way, and Ways, and a Way,
And the High Soul climbs the High Way,
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
And in between on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A High Way and a Low,
And every man decideth
The Way his soul shall go.*

—JOHN OXENHAM.

For Class Discussion

1. Describe Jesus as you picture him at the time of his visit to the temple at Jerusalem. Do you think of him as a miraculous boy or simply one that was naturally bright, but unusually so?
2. What seems to have been Jesus' chief interest at twelve years of age? (*Note Luke 2:49.*) Does this mean that he was not interested in other things also? (*Note Luke 2:52.*)
3. What kind of foundation did Jesus lay for his later life? Recall the last lesson and think what different types of activities he had in Nazareth.
4. What ideal does Luke 2: 52 give us?
5. If a person goes in for athletics only, what usually happens to him? Suppose, on the other hand, that he neglects to train his body. What is the result? Can a person amount to much unless he keeps his body in good condition?
6. If a boy or girl tries to bluff through school and "get by" that way, what will happen when he or she gets older? How can you train your mind now?
7. What do you think of a person who is "cliquey"? Of one who looks down on another who is of different color? What kind of boy do you think Jesus was socially?
8. Develop your physical, mental and social powers and neglect the religious and what is the result? William Carey, the great missionary, said: "My business is to preach the gospel. I cobble shoes to pay expenses." What did he mean?
9. Describe what you think is a well-rounded life.

To Think About This Week

What different vocations are open to men? What ones are women especially fitted for? What should you yourself like to be when you have grown up?

IV

CHOOSING MY LIFE WORK

Jesus Dedicates Himself to Service

To Study in Advance

Matthew 3:1-17; Mark 1:1-11; Luke 3:1-22.

Find the Following Facts

- Who was John the Baptist? (*Luke 1:57-80; 3:2.*)
- His relationship to Jesus. (*Luke 1:36.*)
- Where he lived. (*Matthew 3:1-3; Luke 3:2.*)
- What manner of man he was. (*Mark 1:4-6.*)
- His message to the people. (*Luke 3:7-14.*)
- What he said about Jesus. (*Luke 3:15-17.*)
- What he said to Jesus. (*Matthew 3:13-15.*)
- The experience of Jesus at his baptism. (*Matthew 3:16, 17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21, 22.*)
- How old was Jesus at that time? (*Luke 3:23.*)

Problems

(1) Dr. Smith is the pastor of a busy and useful downtown church. His son John is making a brilliant record in college, especially in English literature and debating. He is active in the college Christian Association. Some of his friends want him to specialize in English and fit himself for teaching and writing. He has been offered a scholarship for graduate work in that subject. His father hopes he will be a minister. How shall John decide the question? What should determine his choice?

(2) The boys call Katharine Lake a flapper. Her father is dead; her mother works as a private secretary to keep the home together and give Katharine an education. Katharine has a good mind, but gets low marks in her studies. Is it wise for her to continue at school? What do you think her mother ought to do? What should Katharine do? Can she live down her reputation and amount to something at school and in the small town in which she lives?

The Years from Twelve to Thirty

The story of Jesus at the temple is the only one we have of his childhood and youth. We wish we knew more about those years from the time he was twelve until he began his public service at thirty. We know that he was a keen observer of people and events and of nature. His was a poetic mind, a loving heart; a boy of generous impulses, chivalrous, kind and sympathetic. He was taught in the home and the synagogue, but the higher education in the schools of the scribes he seems to have lacked. Probably there was none in Nazareth. Perhaps as the oldest child he had to work, and could not go to those schools. Nevertheless he read the Scriptures and as he quoted in later life from them we know that he was familiar with the Psalms, Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Deuteronomy.

People and nature were Jesus' great university. He loved to go up into the hills around Nazareth, a lover of nature and of nature's God. There he would spend much time thinking and reading and dreaming of what he would do with his life when the time came for him to take his place in the world's work. A perfectly normal boy, with every side of his nature developed, he filled those years from twelve to thirty with the best that life offered,—working in the carpenter shop at Nazareth, mingling with the people of the town, talking with the travellers and traders in the caravans that passed the village, and then withdrawing to the hills alone to think and pray and listen to the voice of God.

At twelve Jesus was certain that "his Father's business" was his own chief interest in life. That question settled, he was willing to trust God to open the door of service to him. Meantime he did with his might what his hands found to do. And so when the news came of the strange prophet from the wilderness who was baptizing at the Jordan, Jesus was ready for the call to larger service.

The Work and Message of John

Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-17.

Only six months older than Jesus, a cousin or near relative of his, John grew up in the wilderness of Judea, while Jesus lived in the town of Nazareth. As the mothers of the two boys were related and visited each other, it is probable that Jesus and John were acquainted, and perhaps were even close friends. Both young men had earnest, God-fearing parents. Their mothers were deeply religious, poetic souls. John's father, Zacharias, was a priest.

We wonder whether John and Jesus used to talk things over together. They were not alike in their nature, for John was an ascetic, a stern son of the wilderness; his dress rough, his food the plainest, his message one of denunciation and condemnation. But both Jesus and John were troubled at the social and religious rottenness of their times, and each of them wanted to make his life count in the service of God. They would see each other every year at the Passover at Jerusalem where they would be together a week. And if their mothers were intimate with each other, doubtless their sons also were drawn together by a common purpose, the reform of their nation and the bringing in of God's rule on earth.

We wonder why they did not begin their work earlier; both John and Jesus were about thirty years old when they began to preach. Perhaps the time was not ripe. Perhaps Jesus was needed at home. When John began, however, Jesus joined him. Was this understood and planned between them? Did John already see in Jesus the Messiah, or was he speaking as a prophet without knowing just *who* should be the one to come? We do not know, but it is clear that there was a close tie between them, and that John saw in Jesus one greater than himself whom he felt he was not worthy to baptize.

Note the personality of John: stern, uncompromising, fearless, yet humble in the presence of Jesus. His mes-

sage, "*repent.*" A prophet without regard for people or position, he resembled Amos at Bethel or Elijah of the early days of Israel. He astounded the people of Jerusalem and Judea. They came in throngs to hear him, some drawn by curiosity, others by fear, others by a desire to prepare for the new days which he was predicting should come. His was a spiritual message, direct and forcible, not like the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. As the people heard him, they were stirred with new hopes and expectations. The nation was aroused. The news spread everywhere and soon reached the little village of Nazareth where Jesus was.

Jesus Comes to Be Baptized

Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21, 22.

Closing the carpenter shop, saying goodbye to mother and brothers and sisters, Jesus leaves for the Jordan. For him the years of waiting are over. The call to service has come, and eagerly he sets out on the new road which will end finally at the cross on Calvary.

Try to picture to yourselves the scenes at the Jordan as Jesus approaches: the oriental crowds surging around the solitary preacher, scribes and Pharisees with their heads together, soldiers asking John what they shall do, dishonest tax gatherers anxious to make good their evil deeds, others crowding to be baptized for their sins,—all of them milling and pushing around. A spirit of expectation, a sense of fear and foreboding, a new hope, and among the earnest souls joy and thanksgiving for the message of the young wilderness prophet.

Think if you can what may have been Jesus' thoughts as he drew near the Jordan. He had come with a definite purpose, to be baptized and take his stand with John in the reform work he had begun (*Matt. 3: 13*). When John would have hindered him because he felt himself unworthy to baptize so pure a soul, Jesus told him that in that way he could be identified with the new movement.

It was like raising his colors to the masthead where everyone could see and know just where he stood.

When anyone gives himself fully to God and really wants him to use his life as he sees best, there comes within an experience of peace and joy that cannot be described in words. The Gospels try to picture this experience of Jesus at his baptism. The Master was praying. As he prayed he saw the heavens open and the spirit of God as a dove descending upon him; and he heard a voice saying, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." (*Read the account in Matt. 3: 16, 17; Mark 1: 10, 11; Luke 3: 21, 22.*) Through this picture we can see the heart of Jesus. He was consecrating himself to new service. He was placing his life absolutely in God's hands, and he experienced within himself a feeling of perfect peace and joy and the absolute certainty that he was the Son of God. The dove symbolized purity and innocence and love. Here it represented the union of Jesus with his heavenly Father. He *knows* that he is to do God's work and is ready to go wherever he leads. The experience is almost too sacred to share with others, yet Jesus must have told his disciples of it, just as later he revealed to them the temptations which he fought through in the wilderness.

The open heavens indicated that between Jesus and God there was no barrier. Heaven and earth had met; the Spirit of God was come upon him with power.

The voice, audible to others or not, expressed to Jesus the conviction that in a unique and very real sense he was God's Son. The budding of the feeling which he had in the temple at twelve now came to full flower at his baptism. He and the Father are working together in perfect harmony. He *knows* he loves God; he is convinced that God loves him. He feels himself filled with a new power; a wonderful experience has taken place within him. He comes from the water a transformed Jesus. The old days are gone forever. Henceforth he will give all his time and energy, even life itself, for the Father whom he serves.

The Power of a Life Really Given to God

Today to be a Christian is too easy. Often it means nothing at all; just a name, but otherwise in no way different from anyone else. A veneer put on because it is "the thing" to do, and respectable people generally are Christians.

Being a Christian in America is no hardship. It requires no sacrifice. There is no danger to life or reputation in it. One does not lose his job or his social position because he is a Christian. And so the Christian life is accepted too casually. It doesn't bite into one's being. It lacks the dynamic force, the urge, the drive which Jesus felt as he came that day from his baptism at the Jordan. And the Christian misses the new power within, the peace and joy that come from no other source. Such things come only through a complete giving of the life to God; the absolute surrender of self; the sincere desire to put his service first of all. The early Christians knew what it meant. They became social outcasts for the Master's sake. They were persecuted, tortured, burned, slain, thrown to the wild beasts of the arena. To be a Christian in those days, *cost* much, and so it meant much; and that is why Christianity has spread all over the world.

Today some people have this spirit. If others lack it, it is because the ease and wealth of these times have stifled it. Self has taken the place of service. The Master's teachings have been called impractical, or not meant to be taken as he gave them. The Golden Rule is a good ideal, folks say, but you can't be a real Christian and succeed in business. Yet Gandhi, a Hindu in India, the great leader of the non-resistance movement in that country, is taking Jesus literally. He has caught his spirit and imparts it to his followers. His life challenges the Christians of America. As never before we need today to take Jesus in earnest. This is the plea of our finest Christian leaders today.

Is it worth while to take Jesus in earnest? Can a life today have the power and the peace that Jesus had? Read the experience of Stanley Jones and ask yourself if it is

worth having. He is a missionary in India. His health broke. A year's furlough in America gave him no lasting benefit. On his return to India he collapsed. Another rest of several months, but still unable to do his work.

In this condition he says:

"I saw that unless I got help from somewhere I would have to give up my missionary career, go back to America and go to work on a farm to try to regain my health. It was one of my darkest hours. At that time I was in a meeting at Lucknow. While in prayer, not particularly thinking about myself, a Voice seemed to say, 'Are you yourself ready for this work to which I have called you?' I replied: 'No, Lord, I am done for. I have reached the end of my rope.' The Voice replied, 'If you will turn that over to me and not worry about it, I will take care of it.' I quickly answered, 'Lord, I close the bargain right here.' A great peace settled into my heart and pervaded me. I knew it was done! Life—abundant Life—had taken possession of me. I was so lifted up that I scarcely touched the road as I quietly walked home that night. Every inch was holy ground. For days after that I hardly knew I had a body. I went through the days, working all day and far into the night, and came down to bedtime wondering why in the world I should ever go to bed at all, for there was not the slightest trace of tiredness of any kind. I seemed possessed by Life and Peace and Rest—by Christ himself.

"The question came as to whether I should tell this. I shrank from it, but felt I should—and did. After that it was sink or swim before everybody. But nine of the most strenuous years of my life have gone by since then, and the old trouble has never returned, and I have never had such health. But it was more than a physical Touch. I seemed to have tapped new Life for body, mind, and spirit. Life was on a permanently higher level. And I had done nothing but take it!

"I suppose that this experience can be picked to pieces psychologically and explained. It does not matter. Life

is bigger than processes and overflows them. Christ to me had become Life.

"Apart from this Touch I question if I would have had the courage to answer the call to work among these leaders of India's thought and life. It was too big and too exacting. But here I saw my Resources. And they have not failed."

—From *The Christ of the Indian Road*,
by E. STANLEY JONES. Copyright, 1925.
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For Class Discussion

1. What do you think led Jesus to give up his work in Nazareth and devote his life to the service of others? When did he begin to think of doing so? Why did he not begin his public work earlier?
2. What do you see in the experience of Jesus at his baptism? Of what was he convinced? Why did he have such a wonderful experience?
3. How can we know what to choose for our life work? Shall our choice be governed by wages, comforts, the need, the good we can do? In what order would you name these? Shall you choose what you like to do? What you can do best? That in which you can do the most good?
4. Turn to the story of Dr. Smith's son in the Problem Section. What do you think John should decide to make his life work?
5. What chance has Katharine Lake to make her life useful? What can others do to help her?
6. What would happen to Christians if they really took Jesus in earnest? What would be the result in the town in which you live? What changes would take place in your church?
7. What is the difference between a life that has a serious purpose and one that lacks a purpose and a worthwhile goal?

To Think Over Through the Week

What kind of temptations do you find the hardest to meet? Why?

V

HOW TO MEET TEMPTATION Jesus Determines His Life Principles

To Study in Advance

Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12, 13; Luke 4:1-13. See also Genesis 3:1-21.

Find the Following Facts

Where Jesus went after his baptism. (*Matthew 4:1; Luke 4:1.*)

How long he was in the wilderness. What he was doing there. (*Matthew 4:2.*)

The first temptation and Jesus' answer. (*Matthew 4:3, 4.*)

The second temptation. (*Matthew 4:5-7.*)

The third temptation. (*Matthew 4:8, 9.*)

How Jesus finally settled the battle. (*Matthew 4:10.*)

The sequel to the temptations. (*Matthew 4:11.*)

Problems

(1) Mike, the Greek, was a wrestler on his college team. In an indoor meet with another college he faced the captain of the opposing team. On the outcome of their match depended the result of the meet. Mike was a straightforward, earnest Christian. The captain of the other team was known to be a crooked player. The two shook hands and went to the mat. The referee's whistle blew and the struggle began. Before a minute had passed, Mike's opponent deliberately but stealthily fouled him three times. The referee did not see him do it.

Some of the college "rooters" on both sides saw that Mike was holding his man, but not trying to put him down. Amazement, then anger swept over the spectators. Cries of "yellow," "coward," "put him out" were hurled

at Mike, but still he did not put his man down though it was plain he could do so if he tried. Finally time was up; the referee's whistle blew. Both wrestlers arose. The captain walked off without shaking hands. A torrent of abuse swept down on Mike from the galleries. But Mike stood there on the mat until it stopped. Then he said, looking the crowd straight in the face, "You have hissed me. You have booed me. You have called me yellow, but I tell you that your captain purposely fouled me three times before a minute had passed and I will have nothing to do with a man who plays dirty." And Mike walked off. First a hush and then a wave of cheers swept from the same throats that a minute before had hurled their taunts at him.

What do you think of what Mike did? Why not have gone through with the match and won the points for his college? Why did everyone applaud him after he told them the story of the match?

The result of Mike's stand for clean sport—the college to which the "dirty" captain belonged went in and cleaned up their athletics. Their leaders later told Mike's college that their "clean-up" of the low standards in their own college was due directly to what Mike did and said that night of the indoor meet.

Could Mike have done so much for clean sport if he had gone through with the match and said nothing? He did not win the points for his team, but what greater victory did he win for his college?

(2) Passing by the teacher's desk when he was out of the room a high school girl saw lying on it a paper headed "Final Examination in Geometry." She could easily stop and examine it and nobody know the difference. She was shaky about that examination and had been dreading it. Now the questions were hers if she looked.

Why not do it? Her family would be so glad to have her pass. She had worked and had not slighted her

"math," but she never could understand geometry. If she knew what the examination would be, she could look up the problems and then she would have nothing to worry about. "Everyone else would do it," she said to herself. "Lots of the boys and girls crib. Why shouldn't I just look at this paper, just a minute?"

What do you think she should do? What is the standard in your school on cribbing? Are there shades of it that the crowd says are all right? What happens to the girl if she looks at the paper even if no one sees her do it?

(3) A hotly contested college football game, the last of the season. On it depended the championship of their Conference. Team A— was leading Team B—. A goal from the field would give Team B— the victory. It had fought its way down the field until within striking distance of the other's goal. Time was almost up. The dusk of late November was settling on the field. The signal was given, the ball snapped to the fullback for a drop-kick. His foot met the ball squarely and it sailed over the cross bar and then the whistle blew for the end of the game. On to the field rushed his college supporters in a frenzy of joy. His drop-kick had given them the victory and the championship. But the fullback shook his head. The referee could not see it, but he knew that the ball did not touch the ground before he kicked it. He was hurried and excited and kicked too soon. It was a punt and not a drop-kick, and therefore no goal.

He could have said nothing and the referee would have given his team the winning points. His name would have gone down in college tradition as the one who snatched victory from defeat in the last seconds of a great game. Just to keep still and say nothing. How much depended on his decision? The joy of his college turned to sullen sorrow, if he told the truth. Instead of a victory his last game a defeat, because he told. So he reasoned. Yet he stood and shook his head and told the truth, and the

other team went off with the victory and the championship.

What do you think he should have done? This is a true story. It is told every year to the incoming class at that college. Why? What victory did he really win for his college? Which was of greater importance, the points to be gained by keeping still, or the influence of such a stand for the right? Later he enlisted in the World War, rose from a private to a captain, and gave his life in the Cause as bravely as he had faced defeat on the football field. Such lives can not die.

The Background of the Scene

After the mountain top, the valley; after the wonderful experience of Jesus at his baptism follow the temptations. From exaltation of spirit at the Jordan down to the fierce battle with the devil in the barrens of Judea. In these two scenes, Jesus has let us look within his mind. Let anyone who thinks it was "easy for Him to be a Christian" study this story of the forty-day battle of the wilderness. As he was alone at the time, Jesus must have told his friends later about it, perhaps to help them in their struggles, perhaps that they might understand better the principles by which he was guiding his life.

This scene and that of the baptism are crises in Jesus' life. He faced real problems. A new "urge" had mastered him; a new conviction of the very close relation of himself and his heavenly Father. The old days in Nazareth were over; he stood at the parting of the ways. Before beginning the new life of public service he wants to think it over. He must be alone. So he withdrew to the wilderness of Judea and there faced the problem which every one of us faces sooner or later. "What shall I do with my life? How shall I use it? What shall be my guiding principles?"

The First Temptation

Matthew 4:14.

Over a month Jesus spent in prayer and meditation in

the wilderness. He was conscious of new powers, an overwhelming sense of being very near and dear to God, a burning desire to make himself count for God in the world. He had settled the question *what* he would do with his life; the problem he was working out was *how* he should do his Father's will. What kind of Messiah should he be? The three temptations center around Jesus' question, "*How shall I use my life?*"

Note the subtle suggestion to doubt his recent experience in the words, "*If thou art the Son of God*" (*verse 3*). They imply, "Perhaps you are not after all what you think you are. Perhaps there is nothing to that feeling you have within you. Perhaps you have fooled yourself. It may be just imagination. Who knows?" It was a devilish suggestion and it was used in both the first and second temptations.

"Command that these stones become bread" (*verse 3*). They looked like the flat loaves of Oriental bread. Jesus had fasted; he was hungry. It was a natural suggestion; so very clever, so seemingly harmless. Put in our language it meant,—use your power first to satisfy you own needs in life. Why not? A man must live, so they say. Then go ahead and provide for your hunger. But Jesus sees through it and exposes its fallacy. "Man does not live by bread alone," he says. "If I put my personal needs ahead of my duty to God I shall soon lose interest in that duty. Self will stifle service. My body's needs will become supreme; the things of the spirit will be submerged. Bread has its place, but not the first place."

Everyone faces this temptation as he begins his life work, and all through it. We put it this way: "Of course I want to serve God, but I must make a living. No one will make it for me. So the *first thing* is for me to make a fortune. When I have done that, I will help others less fortunate." What is the weak spot in this reasoning? Suppose one puts money and education *first* in his life, what is likely to happen to his desire to serve others?

The Second Temptation

Matthew 4:5-7.

Note again the suggestion to doubt (*verse 6*).

The second was a *temptation to make a display of power* by signs and wonders. All through his ministry Jesus was besieged by the scribes and Pharisees and others forever asking him to do "signs and wonders." These superficial, spectacular deeds he refused, trusting rather to the slower processes of teaching and living. He could have won the mob by being a wonder-working Messiah, but he knew that the result would not last. So he refused. He would not tempt God by such methods. Note that both here and in the first temptation his answers are from the book of Deuteronomy. (*Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:16*.)

Today this temptation comes to us in a desire to escape the hard things of life; to live in the world of our dreams and not face its realities. It is a temptation to dazzle and attract by a brilliant surface rather than to win our way by hard work and honest effort. For a time it may seem to succeed, but before long such a life exposes itself. It cannot meet the test. It has nothing to build on. It flashes and disappears like a meteor falling from the sky.

The Third Temptation

Matthew 4:8-11.

This was a *temptation to compromise with evil*. For Jesus it meant that he should cater to the religious leaders of his times; make some concessions to their ideas and standards, and in return receive their favor and following. So easy to do; so hard to resist. But note his reply: "*Get thee hence.*" No compromise with evil. No surrender. Clear cut, straightforward. And then "the devil leaveth him and angels came and ministered unto him." Within him he feels the sense of victory won, the peace of soul after battle, the joy of fellowship with his Father. From this battle he comes forth with a clear purpose and a settled policy. He has fought and won his life's principles.

He will not serve for selfish purposes. He will not put his own need first. He will not cater to the crowd. He will not compromise with his conscience. He will be himself, the best that he can be. He will give himself, absolutely, fully, with nothing held back. And so he came forth from the wilderness *with power*.

For Class Discussion

1. Which of these temptations are most like those which we have now? Which is the hardest?
2. When does a temptation have most power:—(1) When it has just enough good in the suggestion to make it seem plausible? (2) When we are down in body or mind? (3) When it appeals as something very desirable?
3. A brilliant career opens before the politician. If he becomes mayor or governor or senator, he will have the opportunity to do much for the welfare of others. But to win the election he will have to make some "deals" that are not quite on the level. Why not do so? Doesn't the end justify the means?
4. Which temptation of Jesus did the fullback face when he failed to make the drop-kick? Why should anyone make "much of a fuss" about so "small a matter"?
5. Which temptation did Mike, the college wrestler, face? Why not leave everything to the referee? Isn't that his job? Why bother ourselves about unfair tactics?
6. What temptation did the high school girl suddenly face at the teacher's desk? It wasn't her fault, was it, that the examination paper was lying there? Why not "accidentally" glance at it long enough to know what was on it?
7. What is the difference between a life governed by Christian principles and one that is not? Which is easier? Which is more worth while? Which is more likely to succeed? Why?

To Think Over Through the Week

What can you do for the town in which you live?

VI

MY RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNITY WELFARE

What Jesus Said He Came to Do

To Study in Advance

Luke 4: 16-30. Compare Matthew 13: 54-58.

Find the Following Facts

What Jesus had been doing since the temptation in the wilderness. (*Luke 4: 14, 15.*)

His reputation in Galilee. (*Luke 4: 14, 15.*)

Where he went when he returned to Nazareth. (*Verse 16.*)

The passages he read. (*Verses 17-19.*)

First impressions of his townsmen. (*Verses 20-22.*)

His fearless message; the result. (*Verses 23-27, 28-30;*
also see Mark 6: 1-6.)

Problems

- (1) Two boys saw a young man and woman go speeding down the street in an automobile. The machine was careening from side to side; evidently the driver, who was the young woman, did not have it in control. The boys followed the couple in their own auto and were right on the scene when the other machine went into the gutter and smashed. The young man and woman received no serious injuries but they had left behind them some narrow escapes for other cars, and their wrecked machine showed how near they had come to death. To the traffic officer who arrived at once the man asserted he was driving the auto when it smashed. The boys knew that the girl was the driver. They also knew that both were under

the influence of liquor. The names of the boys were taken as witnesses. They agreed, however, between themselves, that they would "not squeal on the girl. She's a peach."

What do you think the boys should have done when summoned to court?

(2) As a young man named David was going through the woods between his town and a neighboring village, he ran across a still. It was operated by an Italian who was generally called "Mary." He was a notorious character, and had been suspected of bootlegging. His place had been raided but without success.

The young man told his friends, "I am not going to tell on 'Mary.' It is up to the officers to find the still. It's not my job." In the argument that followed he said he would not tell on a person if he saw him commit murder.

What do you think David should have done? Just what was his responsibility for law and order in his community?

Jesus Visits Nazareth

Luke 4:16, 17.

Leaving the wilderness after he had won his battle with temptation and determined his plan of action, Jesus did not return at once to Nazareth, but spent some time teaching and preaching and healing in other parts of his country. People felt his power (*Luke 4:14*). There was a drive to his message, a zeal in his mission, an unswerving purpose to his life. It was a different man from the one who left Nazareth that day to go down to the Jordan where John was baptizing. His fame spread. Everyone praised him and testified to his good works.

Then he came to Nazareth, not a great while after he had left it. But he had changed, and the reports of him that came to the little town had made their impression. His townsmen were waiting for him with mixed feelings.

Picture the scene as he entered the synagogue that Sabbath day. As an honored guest he was handed the roll of scripture by the synagogue attendant. Then he rose to read. Before him were the men and women he had known all his life. There were the boys and girls he had played with. There were people whose houses he had built or repaired. All the home folks were there,—his mother who never quite understood him, his sisters and brothers who wondered sometimes if he were not crazy. At last the son of Nazareth had returned. Now the people would see this young man who had become so famous around Galilee. Can't you imagine them sitting there in the synagogue? A curious crowd, some already jealous of him, some skeptical of what they had heard about him, some believing in him and trusting him.

The Scene in the Synagogue

Luke 4:17-22.

Imagine Jesus' feelings as he stood up to read. He loved Nazareth. His boyhood and young manhood had been spent there. He would have liked to do for that town the helpful deeds he had done in other parts of Galilee. He knew the critical eyes which were upon him. He saw also the friendly faces. And in the solemn hush, he opened the prophecy of Isaiah and read. Then he closed the book, handed it back to the attendant and, sitting down, began to explain the passage.

The passage from Isaiah, he told the people, expressed his own purpose and program. That was just what he was going to do with his life. Note the planks in his platform:

- (1) To preach good news to the poor. (*Verse 18.*)
- (2) To announce to the captives release from the bondage of sin. (*Verse 18.*)
- (3) To bring sight to the blind,—those who are blind physically, but especially those who cannot see the truth. (*Verse 18.*)

- (4) To give liberty to those who are injured and oppressed. (*Verse 18.*)
- (5) To announce that God's kingdom has come into their midst. (*Verse 19.*)

This was Jesus' platform; the program which he had accepted as his own to carry out in the spirit of the prophecy of Isaiah. It is what we call the social gospel; that is, it is a program of help, not only to individuals, but to whole classes and communities.

Jesus was a social reformer. The downtrodden poor and outcast were to be his object of help, and because of his teachings his followers today are trying not only to help the poor but to remove the causes of poverty.

The blind were numerous in Jesus' day. Sore, festering eyes, no sanitary care,—a hopeless, helpless lot. Jesus healed them, but physical healing was not his chief concern. He was thinking of the blindness of mind which would not see the truth. So he called the religious leaders "blind guides." There were blind minds right before him in the synagogue that morning. They are the stubborn kind who think that no new idea has a right to be born. They are too lazy or wilful to think for themselves, and they don't see that new light comes as the years pass. We have such people today; many of them. They go in crowds. They think as the crowd does. They act with the mob.

Note the first impression that Jesus made on his audience. (*Verse 22.*) They *all* agreed that this was a wonderful teacher, sympathetic, kindly, wise. In spite of themselves, they were carried away with his message.

Then the small-town spirit began to work. Astonishment (*Matthew 13: 54*), and the question in their minds, "Where did he get this wisdom? We know him and his whole family. They are sitting here with us now. He wasn't like this when he left the village. There can't be so much, after all, in what he is saying. Why, he is just

our village carpenter, that is all. How foolish to get excited about him. How silly to take seriously what he says about himself. He may fool others in Galilee but we know him. He can't deceive us." And so they worked it over until they were "offended," jealous, angry at the young preacher and his gracious words.

The Conflict and Its Result

Luke 4: 23-30.

Jesus hears their murmurings and divines their thoughts. Then he strikes out straight from the shoulder.

Note his fearlessness (*verse 24*). He calls himself a prophet. He attacks their narrow pride of country. He shows that others besides the Jews were worthy to receive help and were aided by such great leaders as Elijah and Elisha (*verses 24-27*). The Jew was a narrow nationalist. He looked down upon other races just as the so-called one hundred per cent Americans to their own discredit look down today upon those of different color or race. The Jews thought they were the special favorites of God, just as many Americans think they have a right to special privileges from Him. Both groups are wrong, terribly wrong. God is the Father of all races and peoples and colors. The "race question" in Jesus' time was dangerous ground for a public speaker, yet Jesus bravely raised the issue, exposed the shallow thinking of his audience, attacked their prejudices and faced the result with an intrepid spirit. No compromise in his speech. No dodging uncomfortable questions. No endeavor to please the crowd. A brave man; a loving yet searching mind; loving the truth, hating the sham and narrowness of his times.

Goaded to anger, the meeting became a riot. The worshipers rose and hustled him out. Just like crowds today who cry, "Put him out," when they don't like what a speaker says. Only these Jews went a little further. They would kill him. Kill the man at whose gracious words they had marveled. Throw over the village cliff (it is still

there; you can see it when you go to Nazareth) the man who had grown up in their midst, their friend, the companion of many of them. Destroy the prophet with his message of help and teaching. Strange, do you think? It was always so, Jesus told them. (*Mark 6: 4.*) It is so today. When the young people, members of the Fellowship of Youth for Peace, held their convention in Concord, Massachusetts, they were attacked, egged, jeered, persecuted by those who were opposed to their pacifist platform and speeches. All new ideas and idealists face the same experience. Sometimes those in authority close the halls, refuse to grant permits to speakers whose views they fear, misrepresent what they stand for, and try to discredit both the cause and its leaders. Prophets are needed today as much as, if not more than, in the time of Jesus.

The sequel to Jesus' visit was soon over. Only a few words of description but how graphic! (*See verses 29 and 30.*) *He went his way.* Undaunted, fearless, his life in God's keeping, the mob had no power over him.

But what an opportunity to be helped Nazareth lost that day. Even Jesus marveled at their unbelief, and because of it he could do very little. (*See Matthew 13: 58; Mark 6: 5, 6.*)

Questions for Class Discussion

1. Why should the people of Nazareth want to kill one who spoke such "words of grace"? Think of how the anti-slavery leaders were treated in our own country. Not long ago a man in Canton, Ohio, who made war on the vice leaders of that place was brutally murdered. What can good citizens do?
2. What responsibility has your class for the welfare of the community in which you live? Should David have reported to the officers the still he found in the woods? If he didn't do so, was he a partner in crime?
3. Should we leave the task of law-enforcement to the officers? What is our part in it? What is the difference

between "squealing" on a person and co-operating in law enforcement? Are there times when we should tell? When?

4. What should the boys who saw the auto wreck have testified in court? Suppose they try to shield the drunken driver, what may happen the next time she drives a car? If she kills a person by reckless driving, are the boys indirectly responsible?
5. What responsibility have you for the standards in your high school? Is it your business, or not, if there is cheating going on in your school? What about the high school dance? Is it what it should be? How can you make it better? Is it your duty to do so, or wholly the principal's?
6. Jesus came back to his home town with a program of helpful service. What do you think he would say and do if he came to your town?
7. What has the town or city in which you live done for you? What can you do for it? If you receive its benefits, should you not also accept its responsibilities? What ones can you suggest are yours before you are twenty-one years old?

To Think Over Through the Week

Notice what groups of friends you see together and try to discover what draws them to each other. What difference does it make what kind of people a person associates with?

VII

THE INFLUENCE OF FRIENDS AND COMPANIONS

Jesus Chooses His Associates

To Study in Advance

Luke 5:1-16, 27, 28; John 1:35-51.

Find the Following Facts

The names of Jesus' twelve disciples. (*Luke 6:12-16.*)

How they became his friends. (*Luke 5:1-16, 27, 28;*
John 1:35-51.)

Characteristics of some of them.

Why Jesus chose an inner circle.

What he did before he made his selection. (*Luke 6:*
12.)

Problem

They called him Bill in the high school. He was the best athlete in the school. When he was in a football game, his team always won; when he was out, it often lost. He was the hero of many a hard-fought contest. And he was popular, for he was a modest, clean-cut fellow with lots of fun and spirit. But he was the son of the city ashman, and he lived on "K" Street, down in the poor section. At the high school socials he was a favorite with the girls, but none of them invited him to her home. He was not "their social equal." Some of the fellows formed a club, limited in membership and confined to the "best" men in the school. Only they and their sons or friends could ever belong to it. These boys played on the team with Bill. They liked him; they admired him for his manly qualities, but it was noticed that he was not invited to join the "select" club. He was not their "social equal." He could win the game for them but he couldn't be admitted to their inner circle.

What do you think of the way that Bill's schoolmates treated him? How do you suppose Jesus would have treated Bill if he had been in that high school?

Jesus' Work Grows

Jesus was now in the midst of his work. He had settled his life principles; he had determined his plan of action. He knew what he proposed to do. Already multitudes were thronging to him. Wherever he went they listened to him, eagerly. Their sick he healed; the sinful he showed the way to new life. Behind him he left happiness and peace, and new desires for a better life.

John's trumpet blast had aroused the people. He had announced the coming of One greater than himself. He had pointed Jesus to them as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. He kept telling the people that Jesus would become greater and that he himself was not worthy even to unloose the latchet of his shoes. A mighty man was John. A generous soul, glad to welcome Jesus to the work and rejoicing to see his power and influence daily growing.

His increasing work and the desire to share intimately with a chosen few the teachings and aspirations which the general public could not understand led Jesus to select twelve from among his followers who would be his pupils or disciples. He planned to train them as his associates, to counsel with them, to give them special tasks to do, to open to them the meaning of his life purpose, and fit them to carry on his work when he was gone. Read carefully the story of this new step as given in the Bible passages at the beginning of the lesson.

Jesus Calls Four Fishermen to Service with Him

Luke 5:1-11. See also Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20.

Jesus had moved from Nazareth to Capernaum. That busy city on the shore of the Sea of Galilee was henceforth his home and the center of his great work in Galilee. He

was an open-air teacher. By the roadside, at the seashore, on the hillside,—wherever people were, there Jesus came with his message of love and cheer. He knew no race nor color line. He associated with all classes and conditions of people. His message was simple; he taught with authority and not as the scribes and Pharisees with their burdensome literalism.

The story of his summons to four fishermen is a picturesque glimpse of the method of Jesus. Read it in your Bibles.

Simon Peter and his brother Andrew were fishermen. Very likely Jesus knew them; certainly he often stayed in Peter's home in Capernaum. They were washing or casting their nets into the sea. Jesus used Peter's boat as a teacher's desk, by pushing off a little way from the shore, and thus keeping the crowd from coming too close while he preached to them. Then he helps Peter with the fishing and the haul is so great that they are amazed. Peter sees in it a miracle, and so do his partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. To Jesus' invitation, "Follow me," they all respond, leaving their boats, their business, their father, and everything.

These four were humble men, doubtless God-fearing, and evidently of no small ability. James and John seem to have been in good circumstances. Their business was large enough for them to have hired servants. They had their boats and their business, which was an honorable and prosperous one. Yet at Jesus' bidding "they left all and followed him." Does this suggest to you something of the personality and influence Jesus had over people? Those were strong, rugged men. They certainly would not have followed a weak, sentimental man; they must have seen in him and his work something that loomed larger to them than business and everything else. Can't you feel the abandon and zeal with which they joined the band of Jesus? How many today ever give up very much when they say that they will follow Christ?

A Tax Collector Called*Luke 5:27, 28.*

His name was Levi or Matthew and he was a *publican* or tax collector. Think of Jesus inviting one of those social outcasts to be a member of his inner circle! The Jews hated that class and would have nothing to do with them. When Jesus spoke to him, he was "sitting at the place of toll" near Capernaum, on the highway running from Damascus to the Mediterranean Sea. It was his duty to collect dues for Herod the Tetrarch. Like the four fishermen he also "*forsook all*" and followed Jesus. There was something contagious about the new spirit which Jesus brought among them. It won men. They became captivated by the new ideas and were glad to follow the young Leader.

Levi must have been fairly well-off for he gave a feast to which many came, and Jesus sat at dinner with them all. This was too much for the self-righteous Pharisees. Their noses went into the air at once. So they went and told the disciples what they thought about their Master. "Why," they said, "he can't be much. Look at him associating with those low-down folk. No one with any standing would think of doing so, especially anyone who called himself a religious leader." The critics had begun their work, and they kept it up all through Jesus' ministry until finally they nailed him to the cross. Strange, isn't it, that a good man with good motives must always face persecution if he tries to lead people forward out of the old ruts of narrow thinking and selfish living? Is it so today?

Note how speedily and effectively Jesus silenced the hypocrites (*verses 31, 32*). They had spoken to the disciples, but they got their answer from the Master himself. In every circumstance he is always Master of men and events, always calm, always poised. His very presence was a blessing to those seeking light, and a rebuke to those who loved darkness.

The Names of the Twelve Comrades*Luke 6: 12-16.*

They had joined the ranks at different times, some by direct invitation of Jesus, others drawn to him voluntarily or brought by friends. Probably he had quite a large following at this time. From them he would choose twelve.

Notice that he spent all night in prayer before he called the disciples and announced the twelve whom he chose to be his apostles or messengers. In every crisis we find Jesus praying. Much depended on this choice. They were to be his council, his representatives, his co-workers in the greatest work that a man can do. If they failed him at the end to whom should he turn? If they could not understand his message, what hope of getting it to the crowds who came and went? It was an important choice, and the Master knew it.

Of the twelve whom he chose all but one stood by him to the end. Another faltered on the night of Jesus' betrayal, but pulled himself together and became one of the strong leaders of the early church. Most of the twelve, as is natural, were from Galilee, where Jesus did most of his work. But James and John and Peter were the three closest to the Master. They were nearest him in his final struggles in the Garden of Gethsemane; they were with him on the Mount of Transfiguration. They shared his confidences. They were his trusted co-workers. Just why Judas turned out a traitor we do not know. He was the treasurer of the little group. He may have been mastered by a desire for wealth and position, and angrily disappointed at the Master's failure to set up an earthly kingdom. Even he proclaimed his error by committing suicide; perhaps in those last moments something of real, though misdirected manhood asserted itself, and in bitter anguish he tried to blot out the memory of his evil deed by taking his own life.

The Fruits of Friendship

"The aid we may receive from friendship may be of an even more powerful, because of a more subtle, nature than material help. It may be a safeguard against temptation. The recollection of a friend whom we admire is a great force to save us from evil, and to prompt us to good. The thought of his sorrow in any moral breakdown of ours will often nerve us to stand firm. What would my friend think of me, if I did this, or consented to this meanness? Could I look him in the face again, and meet the calm, pure gaze of his eye? Would it not be a blot on our friendship, and draw a veil over our intercourse? No friendship is worth the name which does not elevate, and does not help to nobility of conduct and to strength of character. It should give a new zest to duty, and a new inspiration to all that is good.

"Influence is the greatest of all human gifts, and we all have it in some measure. There are some to whom we are something if not everything. There are some who are grappled to us with hoops of steel. There are some over whom we have ascendancy, or at least to whom we have access, who have opened the gates of the City of Mansoul to us, some we can sway with a word, a touch, a look. It must always be a solemn thing for a man to ask what he has done with this dread power of influence. For what has our friend to be indebted to us—for good or for evil? Have we put on his armor, and sent him out with courage and strength to the battle? Or have we dragged him down from the heights to which he once aspired? We are face to face here with the tragic possibilities of human intercourse. In all friendship we open the gates of the city, and those who have entered must be either allies in the fight or treacherous foes.

"All the fruits of friendship, be they blessed or baneful, spring from this root of influence, and influence in the long run is the impress of our real character on other lives. Influence cannot rise above the level of our lives. The

result of our friendship on others will ultimately be conditioned by the sort of persons we are. It adds a very sacred responsibility to life. Here, as in other regions, a good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit."

—From *Friendship*, by HUGH BLACK.
Fleming H. Revell Company.

Friendship with Christ

"Fellowship with Christ, being much in his company, thinking of him, seeking to please him, will produce likeness, and bring us together on more intimate terms. For as love leads to the desire for fuller fellowship, so fellowship leads to a deeper love. Even if sometimes we almost doubt whether we are really in this blessed covenant of friendship, our policy is to go on loving him, serving him, striving to please him; and we will yet receive the assurance, which will bring peace; he will not disappoint us at the last. It is worth all the care and effort we can give, to have and to keep him for our friend who will be a lasting possession, whose life enters into the very fiber of our life, and whose love makes us certain of God.

"We ought to use our faith in this friendship to bless our lives. To have an earthly friend, whom we trust and reverence, can be to us a source of strength, keeping us from evil, making us ashamed of evil. The dearer the friend and the more spiritual the friendship, the keener will be this feeling, and the more needful does it seem to keep the garments clean. It must reach its height of intensity and of moral effectiveness in the case of friendship with God. There can be no motive on earth so powerful. If we could only have such a friendship, we see at once what an influence it might have over our life. We can appreciate more than the joy, and peace, and comfort of it; we can feel the *power* of it. To know ourselves ever before a living, loving Presence, having a constant sense of Christ abiding in us, taking him with us into the market-place, into our business and our pleasure, to have him as our

familiar friend in joy and sorrow, in gain and loss, in success and failure, must, in accordance with all psychological law, be a source of strength, lifting life to a higher level of thought, and feeling, and action."

—From *Friendship*, by HUGH BLACK,
Fleming H. Revell Company.

Questions for Class Discussion

1. Think of some of your friends. What has attracted you to them? On what does a real, lasting friendship depend?
2. Is it right to have a few special friends who are closer to you than others? How can you have them without being cliquey and exclusive?
3. What do you think Bill's classmates should have done? (*See problem at beginning of lesson.*) Is there a place for social distinctions? If so, what is it? What is the danger of them? What was the attitude of Jesus toward such distinctions? What about his friends, Peter, James and John?
4. If you play on a team with a fellow, have you any right to leave him out of your social affairs?
5. What should be the basis of our choice of friends—their money, position, personality, popularity, their need of a friend, the help we can be to them, or what? What seems to have been Jesus' principle in choosing his intimates?
6. When does a friendship pull down? When does it lift a person up?
7. Can you think what it must have been to have had Jesus' friendship? Is this friendship possible now? How?

To Think Over Through the Week

When does popularity become dangerous? How can it be a power for good?

VIII

DOES IT PAY TO BE POPULAR?

Growing Popularity and Its Problems

To Study in Advance

Mark 1: 32-45; 6: 45-47; Luke 4: 31-43; Matthew 14: 13-23; John 6: 14, 15, 66-69.

Find the Following Facts

What Jesus did in the cities into which he went. (*Mark 1: 32-45.*)

The result of his healing and teaching.

Why embarrassing to him.

The miracle that brought a great crisis in Jesus' career. (*Matthew 14: 13-23.*)

What the people then tried to do with him. (*John 6: 14, 15.*)

The result of Jesus' refusal to be king. (*John 6: 66-69.*)

Problems

(1) In the village where Elizabeth Eddy lived the town carried to the high school in the center the boys and girls who lived on the outskirts. Not long after the fall term began a fellow named Clarence found delight in regaling the crowd with his stories as they rode to school. Some of these were good, some not. As he became better acquainted and found himself the center of attraction in the bus he grew bolder with his stories. Still many of the boys and girls laughed with him. Some did not laugh, but said nothing. Elizabeth, however, would not stand for the stories and told Clarence so. He laughed at her, called her Miss Prudy, and told her to get out and walk if she didn't like to hear them. This she said she would do if he didn't stop telling them. Everyone was eager to see what would happen.

What do you think Elizabeth did? Suppose she had

backed down, what would have been the result? What good would it have done for her to get out and walk; wouldn't Clarence have just laughed and told his stories to the others? Why didn't she want to tell the bus driver about it? What would you do if you were in Elizabeth's place?

(2) In 1919, Sergeant Alvin York returned from the World War. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Congressional Medal of Honor, the rarest of American decorations. (*Read the story on page 61.*)

As he stepped from the steamer he found a theater manager waiting for him at the gang plank. The manager offered him \$1000 a day if he would go with his theater company and tell the story of his thrilling encounter with the Germans. Sergeant York was a poor boy. His wages had been a dollar a day when he left for the war. Now he was offered many times this sum.

What do you think he should have said to the theater manager? Why? As a matter of fact, he refused the offer. Why do you suppose he did so? Look farther over in this lesson and you will find the story of what he did and why he did it. Read it and then decide what you think of the man who refused to capitalize his experiences in battle.

Jesus' Popularity Increases

Mark 1:32-45; Luke 4:31-43.

Read these passages; look between the lines and see what busy days Jesus was living. Wherever he went throngs met him. They crowded around the door of his house in Capernaum. They were waiting for him with their sick at the close of the Sabbath day. Some even removed the tiles of the roof that they might lower their helpless friend to him and receive his healing touch.

Note *Mark 1:33*, "all the city was gathered together at the door"; and *Mark 1:37*, "all are seeking thee"; and *Mark 1:45*, "Jesus could no more openly enter a city, but

was without in desert places; and they came to him from every quarter."

It was the height of Jesus' popularity. The people of Galilee were at his feet. His name was on every lip. No one had ever seen or heard of anything like the mighty works he was doing in their midst. But popularity brought serious problems with it.

(1) He was thronged with people all the time. This left him no opportunity to be alone with his disciples, or even to pray by himself. When he did get up in the night and go off to a mountain to pray, his disciples hunted him up as soon as they awoke and found him gone. Popularity was a tax on his time and strength.

(2) People were more anxious to be healed than to hear his message. So many sick were thrust before him that his teaching was constantly interrupted. Yet he rightly considered his teaching work to be most important.

(3) There was a growing belief that he was the Messiah; they were looking for him to deliver them from their enemies. This was most serious and might break up his work. Their idea of the Kingdom and his were radically different.

So while Jesus welcomed the throngs and healed and taught them, he was not unaware of the dangers that popularity brought to his work.

Jesus Refuses to Be a King

Matthew 14: 22, 23; Mark 6: 45, 46; John 6: 14, 15.

The enthusiasm for Jesus burst its bonds after he fed the multitude with the five loaves and two fishes. "This must be the Messiah," they cried. "Was it not predicted that he should feed his flock like a shepherd?" It was a mob and mob enthusiasm was rushing through it.

Jesus again stood at the parting of the ways. His ministry in Galilee had been markedly successful. The zeal of his disciples, their faith in him, their willingness to follow him, were wonderful. His choice of his inner circle

seemed justified. On every hand he had proofs of the need of his service and of the good he was doing. Success had crowned his efforts. The people wanted him to declare himself to be the Messiah, and Jesus knew it. They wanted an earthly deliverer, one who should set up his kingdom in Jerusalem, overthrow the rule of Rome, and bring all nations into subjection to them. How they had longed and waited for this deliverer. And here he is, they thought, right in our midst. Why wait longer? We will force him to be our king. (*See John 6: 14, 15.*)

Do you not see in this crisis the same temptation he had fought out in the wilderness,—the temptation to fall down and worship Satan, the suggestion to compromise with evil, to cater to the demands of the crowd, to yield to their desires? It was a powerful temptation, for the good to be accomplished might seem to justify the means. But Jesus saw through it all. He knew that the mob was attracted by the spectacular. He saw that they cared more for bread to eat than for ideas to think about. It was a superficial, fickle mob, ready to follow him today and desert him tomorrow. Always sensitive to the moods of his audience, Jesus anticipated their move. His mind was made up. He would not be the popular Messiah. He would be loyal to the principles he had determined upon and trust to the teaching of the truth rather than appeal to the spectacular. He knew what his decision would cost him, but he faced the issue with courage and faith.

Read what he did in *Matthew 14: 22, 23; Mark 6: 45, 46; John 6: 15.* Note the word *straightway*; that is, immediately. It was swift action; no hesitation, no stopping for argument. He “constrained” his disciples; almost forced them into their boat. How hard for them to understand Jesus sometimes! What an opportunity he seemed to be throwing away! Look at him sending the multitudes away just as they are about to hail him as King! What a mistake! Our Master cannot understand how people feel. He must be crazy to deliberately reject their offer. So the

disciples thought as they were hustled into the boat and saw Jesus dispersing the surprised and disappointed mob.

The Result

John 6:66-69.

The disciples and the people gone, Jesus withdrew to a mountain to be alone and pray. The next day he returned to Capernaum. When the people hunted him up and found him there he frankly told them that they wanted bread to eat and cared nothing for the truth he taught. (*See John 6:22-27.*) They had not recovered from their disappointment, but the reaction against him was beginning. They could not understand Jesus. He was so different from what they thought he was. I wonder if people today would understand him; what do you think about it?

Just a line or two in John's Gospel tells us what happened. "Many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." And Jesus turned to the Twelve, his inner circle of friends, and said, "Would ye also go away?" (*John 6:66, 67.*) Note the wistful yearning in that question. "Others are leaving me; are you going to stand by and carry on?" said Jesus. It was the first test of their loyalty. Much depended upon the answer. As usual the impulsive, generous-hearted Peter speaks up. No question of his loyalty. He believes absolutely in Jesus. And what Peter said, the others were thinking. The test was met and passed. The inner circle would not fail the Master. From this time forward, he gave less attention to the multitudes and more to the intensive training of this group of Twelve. Popularity might fade away. Jesus knew that he had met the crisis as God would have him meet it, and sustained by this serene trust he calmly faced the future.

The Man Who Refused \$1000 a Day

During the World War Sergeant Alvin C. York of Tennessee was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Congressional Medal of Honor, the rarest of American decorations, and was commended publicly before all the

officers of the 82nd Division. He had performed what was very generally conceded to be the most heroic feat of the whole World War. He was a great American soldier.

Sergeant York is still a great soldier. But now he is a soldier of Truth and Enlightenment. His greatest fight was after the war. And it was against, not a human enemy but the great tyrants, Ignorance and Illiteracy.

Sergeant York had never been a church man, but through the influence of the girl he later married, he joined the Christian Church and went into Christian work in earnest shortly before he became a soldier. When the war came he went to France with the 82nd Division, and in October, 1918, he performed the amazing and heroic feat that won him the praise of an entire nation.

But his head was not turned by this praise. His modesty and his Christian faith kept him aloof from the temptations of popularity. Even when, after his return to America, Sergeant York was given an opportunity to capitalize his fame and bravery by appearing in the moving pictures and on the stage, he refused. He retained his balance and stuck to his ideals in spite of the alluring opportunity to secure lifelong ease and luxury, wealth and fame. He gave up all these that he might carry out his plan of helping to lessen the illiteracy and ignorance prevalent in the Southern mountain districts from which he came, and now the school of his dreams is coming true. The Alvin C. York Industrial Institute in eastern Tennessee, a vocational high school, has been opened.

Sergeant York fought a good fight to raise the funds to start his school. He labored steadily and courageously. His fight was unselfish and self-sacrificing. But now he has won. He is a great soldier—and all because of his splendid courage, loyalty to his ideals, and his simple faith in God.

For Class Discussion

1. Jesus might have yielded to the crowd and become their king. What might have been the result if he had done

so? Why could he not yield a little, compromise somewhat, and not be so decisive with them?

2. In what ways was popularity embarrassing to Jesus? Do you think that popularity is helpful or harmful to a person today? Why? When can it be a means of usefulness? When may it be a source of harm?
3. Elizabeth Eddy might have kept still and said nothing to Clarence. In doing so, would she be a party to his stories? What was the easy thing to do? What danger to herself did she run, no matter what she said and did? What is the best thing to do when the crowd get to telling stories? Can it be done without seeming to be a Pharisee and high-brow?
4. Why did Alvin York refuse the offer of the theater manager? What do you think were his reasons? Why not have accepted the money and used it for his college? It would have been an easy way to get it, wouldn't it? Which is more important, the source from which a person's money comes or the use he makes of it? Are both the source and the use important?
5. Do you think a person should "run for office"; that is, become a candidate for election? How about trying to get elected captain of the baseball or basketball team? Who is usually elected to such offices? Suppose he or she caters to the crowd, what usually happens?
6. Think over the most popular boy you know. What makes him popular? What is the effect on himself? The result on others? Do the same with the girls you know. Why did she become the most popular girl in the school? Will her popularity last? What do you think of her future? Why?

To Think Over Through the Week

Try to find out how many of your friends regularly pray. Find why they do, and also why others do not.

IX

WHY PRAY?

The Source of Jesus' Strength

To Study in Advance

Matthew 14:23; 26:36-46; Mark 1:35; Luke 3:21, 22; 6: 12, 13; 10:17-22; John 11:41-43; 17:1-26; Matthew 27:45, 46; Luke 23:44, 45.

Find the Following Facts

1. What Jesus did after feeding the Five Thousand. (*Matthew 14:23.*)
2. How he got his strength in Gethsemane. (*Matthew 26:34-46.*)
3. What he did after a busy day in Capernaum. (*Mark 1:35.*)
4. What he did at the time of his baptism. (*Luke 3:21, 22.*)
5. What he did before choosing the twelve disciples. (*Luke 6:12, 13.*)
6. What he did on the return of the seventy apostles. (*Luke 10:17-22.*)
7. What he did at the raising of Lazarus. (*John 11:41-43.*)
8. What he did on the last night with his disciples. (*John 17:1-26.*)
9. To whom he looked for help on the Cross. (*Matthew 27:45, 46; Luke 23:44, 45.*)
10. What he taught his disciples to do. (*Luke 11:1-4.*)
11. Someone for whom Jesus prayed. (*Luke 22:31, 32.*)

Problems

- (1) David Livingstone prayed, "O God, help me to paint this dark continent (Africa) white." And he did so.

Through Livingstone the light of Jesus' gospel penetrated Africa; he painted it white.

Suppose Livingstone had prayed, O God, paint this dark continent (Africa) white, do you see any difference in the two prayers? What difference? What gave power to Livingstone's prayer?

(2) It was the week of the semi-final exams. Some of them had been pretty stiff. Just as the papers were given out one morning for the examination in Algebra a girl was noticed to close her eyes and bow her head for a few moments. Her classmates saw that she was praying. One of the boys said afterwards, "It was too late for her to pray then. She ought to have worked harder beforehand."

Do you think that prayer helped the girl in her Algebra examination or do you think that the boy was right? Why do you think so?

(3) One evening the tender of a boat broke loose in a sudden squall and swept it and a fifteen-year-old boy out to sea. The storm increased and night fell, and the boy was alone in a leaky boat on the Atlantic Ocean. It was twenty-four hours before the United States revenue cutter found him. When he was brought in safe and sound, he said, "I prayed as I never prayed before and I felt sure someone would pick me up."

Why did the boy pray when he was drifting out to sea in the storm? Why do people pray at such times who never pray at any other time? What good did it do the boy to pray for help?

Jesus Prays

(See references under *To Study in Advance*.)

Eleven instances of Jesus praying are given in this lesson. Considering how brief is the record of his life and how much is packed into it, these glimpses of the Master

at prayer are illuminating and satisfying. Most of these cases are times of great crisis or strain.

When he faced the mob's demand that he be their Messiah king, he went away and prayed. The habit of his early life in Nazareth was a source of help to him later in those busy years of the Galilean ministry.

In the Garden of Gethsemane when the mob was on the way to seize him,—again he faced a crisis. Should he escape from the Garden and save his life, or remain, be captured and suffer crucifixion? He prayed in agony that night, but he came from his prayer with a calm power that awed the mob. Where did he get that power and serene strength? Undoubtedly from prayer.

At the close of a busy day in Capernaum—the throngs had pulled on his strength, worn on his sympathy, tried his patience. And in the night he stole away to the hills to pray. There the disciples found him next morning.

When he was being baptized he was in prayer, and there came to him that wonderful experience which sent him forth into the wilderness and out into the world as God's messenger. Prayer opened heaven to him and the Spirit came upon him with power.

Before making the important choice of the Twelve he prayed,—not a little prayer of a few words, but a night of prayer. He talked it over with God, and the next morning he selected his inner circle of twelve comrades. Did prayer help him in the choice?

When the seventy whom he had sent out to preach had returned with the story of their success, he thanked God in prayer. This was a different type of experience from the others. Notice what the others were.

At the tomb of Lazarus, the brother of his friends Mary and Martha, Jesus prayed. Here was a prayer of gratitude to God for hearing his petition, and it was offered before they knew that Lazarus was alive. Note the sublime confidence Jesus had in his Father.

On the last night he spent with his disciples Jesus prayed

for them. Read the beautiful prayer (*John 17:1-26*). If prayer cannot help another why do you suppose Jesus took the time on that last night to pray for his friends?

On the cross twice we hear him appealing to God. Once in the height of his agony he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And at the end, the battle won, life almost spent, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Through those cruel hours he found strength in prayer.

When his disciples saw him praying they wanted him to teach them to pray, and so we have "The Lord's Prayer" which all of us have repeated and few really prayed, ever since we can remember. Yet Jesus thought it worth while to teach his disciples how to pray.

To the confident Peter on that last day together, Jesus said, "Simon, Simon, Satan desired to have you to sift you as wheat, but I have made supplication for you, that your faith fail not." What a wonderful experience, to have Jesus pray for you. And Peter stumbled but he got up again and took the road of persecution and hardship and death for his Master. Does it do any good to pray for another? Jesus seemed to think so. What do you think about it?

Sum up these times when Jesus prayed and the nature of his prayers,—(1) a prayer for guidance; (2) a prayer for deliverance from a terrible ordeal, the Cross; (3) a prayer for strength; (4) a prayer of communion, a desire to know the Father's will; (5) a prayer for help to make the right choice; (6) a prayer of thanksgiving; (7) another prayer of gratitude and trust; (8) a prayer for his friends; (9) a prayer for personal help; (10) a prayer which he taught others; (11) a prayer for the disciple who denied him at his trial.

Jesus prayed. If he who knew God better than anyone, *prayed*; if he found strength and peace and joy and guidance in prayer; if he prayed for others and taught others to pray,—can we say that prayer has no place in life today? Perhaps you cannot prove the value of prayer as you do a

mathematics proposition, but you can experience it, and after that experience there is no longer any need of argument. The only way to learn the value of prayer is by praying.

Mr. Babson's Questions and the Answers

The following six questions were sent out by Mr. Babson to fifty business leaders:

1. Did you have a praying father, a praying mother, or both?
2. Do you believe there is some Power higher than human power?
3. Do you feel that we are responsible to this Higher Power?
4. Do you feel that we need help from it?
5. Do you ever pray?
6. Has this feeling of responsibility influenced your life?

Read carefully the questions which were sent out; get them firmly fixed in your mind; and see how some of these men responded.

George F. Baker, Chairman of the Board, First National Bank, New York City, multimillionaire and great banker: "I would answer 'Yes' to your questions."

George W. Cortelyou, President of the Consolidated Gas Company of New York, ex-Secretary of the Treasury of the United States: "The answer is 'Yes' to all the questions asked."

Elbert H. Gary, Chairman of the Board, United States Steel Corporation, writes "Yes" after each question on the list.

Clarence H. Mackay, President of the Postal Telegraph Company: "In reply to the questions put by you, I beg to say that I can answer 'Yes' to all of them; and I would particularly emphasize Numbers Two and Three."

Victor F. Lawson, the late proprietor of the Chicago "Daily News," a paper with one of the largest circulations in the world, answers all the questions with an unqualified affirmative. To Number Five he wrote: "Yes, I pray daily."

Mr. J. Ogden Armour's secretary writes, at Mr. Armour's request: "Mr. Armour's father and mother were inherently religious people who believed in prayer, although they were non-sectarian in their views. Mr. Armour himself believes in a Divine Power, to which we all are responsible, and from which we can draw aid and comfort when in need."

Nathan Straus, member of the firm of R. H. Macy and Company, New York, former United States Ambassador, and well-known as a philanthropist, writes, "Yes, both" after the first question; "Yes" after the next three; "Very fervently" after the fifth; and "*Very much*" underlined for emphasis after the last one.

Some of the other men to whom Mr. Babson wrote are Mr. J. P. Morgan, financier, New York City; John D. Rockefeller, capitalist, New York City; Charles M. Schwab, Chairman of the Board, Bethlehem Steel Corporation; Frank A. Vanderlip, banker, New York City; Herbert C. Hoover, at that time United States Secretary of Commerce, Washington.

The attitude of all these men is one of unqualified assent to Mr. Babson's claim that religion, as he defines it, is a powerful and recognized factor in all worth-while achievement—*including business success*.

These leaders in the world of business, who have put themselves on record, believe in their responsibility to others. In that record there is a sermon, not only for all other business men, but for every human being.

—From *The American Magazine*.

What Prayer Meant to Jesus

"To Jesus, for example, the meaning of prayer was not that God would give him whatever he asked. God did not.

That sustained and passionate petition where the Master thrice returned with blood-stained face, to cry, 'Let this cup pass' (*Matthew 26:39*), had 'No' for an answer. Neither did prayer mean to Jesus merely the reflex action of his own mind. Jesus prayed with such power that the one thing which his disciples asked him to teach them was how to pray (*Luke 11:1*); he prayed with such conscious joy that at times the very fashion of his countenance was changed with the glory of it (*Luke 9:28, 29*). Can you imagine him upon his knees then *talking to himself?* Was he merely catching the rebound of his own words? *Surely, when the Master prayed, he met somebody.* His life was impinged on by another Life. He felt a Presence that disturbed him with the joy of elevated thoughts. His prayer was not monologue, but dialogue; not soliloquy, but friendship. *For prayer is neither chiefly begging for things, nor is it merely self-communion; it is that loftiest experience within the reach of any soul, communion with God.*

"Of course, this does not answer all questions about prayer, nor exhaust all its meaning. Definite petition has its important place, and later we must consider it. *But at the beginning of our study, the thought of prayer as communion with God puts the center of the matter where it ought to be.* The great gift of God in prayer is himself, and whatever else he gives is incidental and secondary."

—From *The Meaning of Prayer*, by H. E. FOSDICK.
Association Press.

Two Kinds of Prayer

"We have, then, two fundamentally opposed ideas of prayer; one, that by begging we may change the will of God and curry favor or win gifts by coaxing; the other, that prayer is offering God the opportunity to say to us, give to us, and do through us what he wills. Only the second is Christian. At once we see that the second, no less than the first, and in a way far truer, makes prayer not a form but a force. Prayer really does things. *It cannot*

change God's intention, but it does change God's action. God had long intended Isaiah to be his prophet. When Isaiah said, 'Here am I, send me,' he did not alter in the least the divine purpose, but he did release it. God could do then what before he could not. God had long intended that Africa should be evangelized. When Livingstone cried, 'O God, help me to paint this dark continent white,' he did not alter God's intention, but he did alter God's action. Power broke loose that before had been pent; the cooperation of a man's prayer, backed by his life, opened a way for the divine purpose. There was an invasion of the world by God through Livingstone. No one can set clear limits to this release of divine power which the effectual prayer of a righteous man can accomplish. Pentecost is typical: 'When they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness' (*Acts 4:31*)."

—From *The Meaning of Prayer*, by H. E. FOSDICK.
Association Press.

Questions for Class Discussion

1. What is prayer? Suggest different types of prayer. What kind seems to you to be the best way of praying?
2. Have you any right to sit under a tree in a hard thunderstorm and pray God to take care of you? Why or why not?
3. What was Livingstone's prayer for Africa? What was the difference between asking God to paint Africa white, and asking God to help him paint it white? Which is the truer prayer? Why do you think so?
4. Two scholars in school are of the same ability,—one prays, the other does not believe in prayer. Which one will make a better record? Why do you think so?
5. Why did the boy lost in the boat pray? Do you think he was saved because of his prayer? Is God limited or

bound so that he cannot answer such prayers? Suppose he had not been found, had God in that case failed to answer his prayer?

6. A young man remarked about himself, "I don't believe I have much religion; that is, I don't pray. I have good luck as it is." What did he mean? Do you think he may have been missing something and not realized it? Was he measuring life solely by its material success and overlooking the things of the Spirit that can never be lost or stolen?
7. Does prayer go beyond yourself? That is, does it do any good to pray for another person unless that person knows that you are praying for him? What seems to have been Jesus' answer to this question?
8. What is the difference between saying your prayers and praying?
9. Do most young people whom you know pray? How do you explain their feelings about prayer?
10. What to you is the strongest reason for prayer?

To Think Over Through the Week

How much compensation to the widow does the law allow for a man killed in a railroad accident? Based solely on his financial worth how high would you place a man's value? What makes a life valuable to a community?

X

IS IT RIGHT TO ENSLAVE AND KILL OTHERS?

Jesus' Valuation of a Human Life

To Study in Advance

Matthew 12: 9-13; 16: 26; 18: 1-6; Mark 8: 36; Luke 13: 15, 16; 14: 1-6; 15: 1-7.

Find the Following Facts

What people said to Jesus when he healed on the Sabbath day a man with a withered hand. What Jesus replied to them. (*Matthew 12: 9-13.*)

The value of a life compared with all the riches of the world. (*Matthew 16: 26.*)

The estimate Jesus placed on the lives of little ones. (*Matthew 18: 1-6.*)

Whether Jesus thought people or property worth the more. (*Luke 13: 15, 16; 14: 1-6.*)

The feeling in heaven over the return of one lost sheep. (*Luke 15: 1-7.*)

Problem

In a famous debate with Abraham Lincoln on the question of slavery, Stephen A. Douglas said: "Lincoln says that he looks forward to a time when slavery shall be abolished everywhere. I look forward to a time when each state shall be allowed to do as it pleases. If it chooses to keep slavery forever, it is not my business, but its own; if it chooses to abolish slavery, it is its own business, not mine. I care more for the great principle of self-government, the right of the people to rule, than I do for all the Negroes in Christendom. I would not endanger the perpetuity of this Union, I would not blot out the great

inalienable rights of the white men, for all the Negroes that ever existed."

Compare Douglas' speech with that of Thaddeus Stevens just after the Civil War. Stevens said: "This is not a white man's government. To say so is political blasphemy, for it violates the fundamental principles of our gospel of liberty. This is man's government, the government of all men alike. Equal rights to all, the privilege of government is innate in every mortal being, no matter what the shape or color of the tabernacle which it inhabits."

What is the difference in the two views just quoted? What seems to have been the value of a white man compared with a Negro according to Mr. Douglas? What did Mr. Stevens think about the rights of both white and black? Try to put their speeches into the words you think Jesus would have used. Would his ideas have agreed with or differed from them? In what ways?

Jesus Puts a New Value on Human Life

Matthew 12: 9-13; 16: 26; Luke 13: 15, 16; 14: 1-6.

In Jesus' time life was cheap. Slavery was common. Machinery was practically unknown; human brawn took its place. Boats were propelled by galley slaves; when one fell another took his seat.

Life was cruel. Those in power oppressed the weaker. The rich became richer, the poor grew poorer. There was no idea of the equality of human beings. How they would have laughed at such talk!

As for women, well, they had their place, but it was assigned them by the "lords of creation." Women's rights: they had none other than what the men allowed them. As for children, Jewish mothers and fathers loved them. They always have had a strong home feeling. But some other peoples, as you know from your study of history, exposed their babies on the mountains either to strengthen or kill them. The rights of a child were as unknown as an

aeroplane; one would have been called crazy to think of either.

Into such a world came Jesus with his new teaching. He said that God is the Father of everyone, and therefore all people are brothers and of equal worth in the sight of God. That kind of talk was revolutionary. It is hard for us to realize how such teaching attacked the whole social and industrial order of the day. It meant for the Jews to treat the Samaritans as their equals; to stop looking down on Gentiles; to substitute love for hatred in their attitude toward foreigners.

It meant the abolition of slavery, for no real man would hold his own brother in bondage. It meant protection of the weak, care for the sick, conservation of the lives of babies and children, not their destruction. What a dreamer! What a theorist! How impractical! Why, this man will overthrow everything we have! So Jesus' critics saw and said. And they were right. For Jesus was a reformer and he struck at the roots of the prevailing evils of his day. He had announced in Nazareth his program: "to preach good tidings to the poor; to proclaim release to the captives; to set at liberty them that are bruised." It was a revolutionary program, and even now after 1900 years it is only partly carried through. Not long ago Christian England owned and traded in slaves; and in the memory of many living today in this country we defended our ownership of black men to do our manual work. How slowly the world accepts the teaching of Jesus.

In the time of Charles Dickens in England, little children of the poor had a wretched time. Chimney sweeps, black and bruised, often were children. They had no rights; no justice; little kindness; simply hard toil, long hours and scanty food. Today in Christian America children are still employed in some states in the factories. When they should be at school or at play they are at work indoors in the great factory. Other children toil day after day in the onion and tobacco fields of the North, and the

beet fields of the West. As Jesus looks into these factories and over those fields, I wonder what he thinks. Can you imagine what he would say?

In the Bible passages above, note what his critics said about Jesus. The three cases of healing—the man with the withered hand, the paralyzed woman, and the man with the dropsy—were all done on the Sabbath. There was a Jewish law forbidding a man to do any work on the Sabbath. To heal the sick was work; therefore it was not lawful. In each case, however, Jesus slashes through the hypocrisy of his opponents, and shows the fallacy of any law that stands in the way of human well-being. The Jew would pull his sheep out of the pit on the Sabbath; not to do so would mean the death of the sheep and loss to its owner. He would pull his ass or his ox out of a well; and he would untie his ox on the Sabbath and lead it to the watering trough. Yet they attacked Jesus for healing some unfortunate women and men. Doubtless they were “not of the same social class” as the critics of Jesus, so they thought they were of no account. Why bother to heal them, especially on the Sabbath?

Something of the same spirit still prevails in America. Some people speak contemptuously of the “Wop” or the “Polak” or the “Nigger.” If he is injured or killed at his labor, they think that he is not of much account. Others can take his place. But let an ocean liner sink with some of the financial kings of today and the headlines cover the front pages of the daily press. If Jesus were the editor of the daily paper, I wonder if his headlines would feature one and neglect the other. Perhaps you can suggest some other changes he might make in the “news” that is run about people and events in our daily press.

Another new value, believed today in theory, but seldom practiced, is tucked away in *Matthew 16:26*. A human life is worth more than any material possession. World conquerors, Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon, did not seem to believe this *unless—the life was their own*; then

nothing was too good to pay for its safety. These warriors lusted after conquest. They wanted to possess territory and rule people all over the world. To do so meant conquest by force. This required armies made up of *men*, human beings, trained to go out and kill other human beings, strangers to them, who had done them no injury. Napoleon called men "cannon fodder." So long as the supply lasted he was satisfied. What matter if homes were broken up, children left fatherless, parents bereaved of their sons, so long as some great general had added some more territory to his possessions. Such was war. And today it is the same in spirit, but clothed in more deadly garments. Back of most wars lies a desire for property, for wealth in the form of oil, or iron, or other treasure. Men who want it will declare war to get and hold it. Of course in these days they have to camouflage the real situation and make people think they are fighting for national honor when really they are fighting to take or hold some treasure or trade advantages. And so war comes with its curse and blight. "What shall a man give in exchange for his life?" asked Jesus. Everything, so long as it is his life that is at stake. But if his property is endangered, he is very willing to give the lives of others.

We have not yet sensed the Master's teaching of the value of human life. It was not cannon fodder. It was a sacred thing; the temple of the Holy Spirit. Something to be revered; to be developed; to be used for the moral and spiritual uplift of the world. And it made no difference to him whether the color of the temple was brown, yellow, black or white; and no difference what language was spoken in it. All lives are given by God. He is the Father of all.

God Cares for One as Well as Many

Luke 15: 1-7; Matthew 18: 1-6.

When we look through a telescope at the distant stars and realize that each of them is a world larger than ours,

and surrounded by other worlds, with their own systems, we feel pretty small. The old Hebrew poet felt this way when he said, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him or the son of man that thou visitest him?" And when we use a microscope and examine the myriads of swarming life too small for the eye alone to see, we feel again how insignificant is this one human being who has seemed so precious to us. Then Jesus speaks and puts things again in their right relations. He says the Father knoweth his own sheep by name; not as a mass, a flock, but as individuals. The very hairs of your head are numbered. Ye are of more value than the sparrow whose fall he notes; of much more value than the grass and herbs which he clothes in beauty in the fields. More than that, he speaks of the joy in heaven when *one* lost soul is saved, and of the fate in store for those who lead astray *one* of God's little ones. One person, you, your friend, anyone, anywhere, is precious in the sight of God.

England and America have taken this teaching seriously, as they have given more attention to the individual than have other nations. And in these countries his rights are recognized and protected. Wherever this teaching has been accepted freedom has come, and with it the development of a higher civilization. It set the slave free. It changed and abolished laws that restricted or destroyed the rights of the individual. The feudal system vanished. Kings and empires are no longer fashionable. Judges and jury hear the complaint or defense of the humblest citizen. All these blessings have followed where Jesus' teaching is accepted and practiced. The sacredness of one life is now fully recognized.

Carrying Out the Ideals of Jesus

In Jesus' time there were no hospitals. Now institutions for the care of the sick, the infirm, the friendless are found

all over the world, but nowhere so many and so good as in Christian countries. The attitude toward life has been completely changed as the result of Jesus' life and teachings. "Conservation of health," "life extension institutes," "child welfare," "social hygiene," are familiar terms. Back of them are great movements for human welfare. Life has become a sacred thing, and Jesus has made it so.

But there is still much to be done in the world, for not everyone, even here in America, is willing to practice the teachings of Jesus if they interfere with the profits he can make. Children, too, there are whose lives are still dwarfed and marred by toil and hardship. Many are in the city living in the slums; some in the country where you would think everything should be fair and good.

Miss Jane Addams in her book, *Youth and the City Streets*, tells of some of those whom she knows.

"A Russian girl who went to work at an early age in a factory, pasting labels on mucilage bottles, was obliged to surrender all her wages to her father who, in return, gave her only the barest necessities of life. In a fit of revolt against the monotony of her work, and 'that nasty, sticky stuff,' she stole from her father \$300 which he had hidden under the floor of his kitchen, and with this money she ran away to a neighboring city for a spree, having first bought herself the most gorgeous clothing a local department store could supply. Of course, this preposterous beginning could have but one ending and the child was sent to the reform school to expiate not only her own sins but the sins of those who had failed to rescue her from a life of grinding monotony which her spirit could not brook.

"A young girl of fourteen whose family had for years displayed a certain artistic aptitude, the mother having been a singer and the grandmother, with whom the young girl lived, a clever worker in artificial flowers, had her first experience of wage earning in a box factory. She endured it only for three months, and then gave up her increasing

wage in exchange for \$1.50 a week which she earns by making sketches of dresses, cloaks and hats for the advertisements of a large department store.

"A young Russian girl of my acquaintance starves on the irregular pay which she receives for her occasional contributions to the Sunday newspapers—meanwhile writing her novel—rather than return to the comparatively prosperous wages of a necktie factory which she regards with horror. Another girl washes dishes every evening in a cheap boarding house in order to secure the leisure in which to practice her singing lessons, rather than to give them up and return to her former twelve-dollar-a-week job in an electrical factory.

"All of us forget how very early we are in the experiment of founding self-government in this trying climate of America, and that we are making the experiment in the most materialistic period of all history, having as our court of last appeal against that materialism only the wonderful and inexplicable instinct of justice which resides in the hearts of men,—which is never so irresistible as when the heart is young. We may cultivate this most precious possession, or we may disregard it. We may listen to the young voices rising clear above the roar of industrialism and the prudent councils of commerce, or we may become hypnotized by the sudden new emphasis placed upon wealth and power, and forget the supremacy of spiritual forces in men's affairs. It is as if we ignored a wistful, over-confident creature who walked through our city streets calling out, 'I am the Spirit of Youth! With me, all things are possible!' We fail to understand what he wants or even to see his doings, although his acts are pregnant with meaning, and we may either translate them into a sordid chronicle of petty vice or turn them into a solemn school of civic righteousness.

"We may either smother the divine fire of youth or we may feed it. We may either stand stupidly staring as it sinks into a murky fire of crime and flares into the inter-

mittent blaze of folly, or we may tend it into a lambent flame with power to make clean and bright our dingy city streets."

—Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company from *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*, by JANE ADDAMS.

The War on War

With the growing sense of the sacredness of human life has come a determined effort to end war. Christian people are saying that disputes between nations should be settled by courts and no longer on the battlefield. They rightly believe that force cannot decide a question of fact, or settle a principle of right and wrong.

War is not Christian. Can you imagine Jesus training at the bayonet drill, or stirring up the hatred of his company against the enemy so that they will be willing to go out and kill them? War is degrading. It appeals to the lower and baser instincts. War is destructive and wasteful. It desolates homes and communities, and lays waste the country. War is immoral. It teaches people to lie, to steal, to kill. War teaches hate; Jesus taught us to love one another. There can be no practice of the brotherhood of man between peoples who are at war. War is contrary to everything that is best and noblest in life. It is death; it is hell. It must be abolished.

Gandhi Pleads for Peace

"The way of peace is the way of truth. Truthfulness is even more important than peacefulness. Indeed, lying is the mother of violence. A truthful man can not long remain violent. He will perceive in the course of his search that he has no need to be violent and he will further discover that so long as there is the slightest trace of violence in him, he will fail to find the truth for which he is searching.

"There is no half way between truth and non-violence

on the one hand and untruth and violence on the other. We may never be strong enough to be entirely non-violent in thought, word, and deed. But we must keep non-violence as our goal and make steady progress toward it. The attainment of freedom, whether for a man, a nation, or the world, must be in exact proportion to the attainment of non-violence by each. Let those, therefore, who believe in non-violence as the only method of achieving real freedom, keep the lamp of non-violence burning bright in the midst of the present impenetrable gloom. The truth of a few will count, the untruth of millions will vanish even like chaff before a whiff of wind."

—From *The Literary Digest*.

For Class Discussion

1. Scientists tell us that the material part of us, that is, our human body, if reduced to its chemical properties, is worth only a few cents,—enough phosphorus for a match, enough iron for a two-penny nail, etc. Most of us think we are worth more than that. What gives value to our bodies? What makes some people more valuable than others? On what should the worth of a person be based; the money he can earn, or the service he renders?
2. Paul said, "Ye are the temple of the Holy Spirit." What did he mean? If Paul was right, what obligation and responsibility does that put upon us?
3. What do you think of Douglas' answer to Lincoln? (*See problem at head of this lesson.*) Can you square his words with the teaching of Jesus? Is a government worth more than lives? What is a government for?
4. What do you think of Stevens' views on the subject of race equality? (*See Problem.*) Do the black and the white in this country have an equal opportunity? What is the feeling on the race question in your community?
5. What would be Jesus' answer to Douglas and Stevens? Do you think Jesus is right or wrong? Some people say,

"Yes, that is a good theory, but it won't work." Why won't it work? How can we make it no longer a theory but a fact?

6. Jesus taught us to think of life as sacred. If that is so, how can a person kill another? Does it make it right if it is done in war?
7. Would Jesus be a pacifist if he were here today? (Think this over carefully. There are two sides to the question.)
8. What are the causes of war? Suggest some ways in which we may remove the causes.
9. If all life is sacred, what about injuring another's reputation? Or his feelings? What about your own life, how can it be kept sacred for service?

To Think Over Through the Week

As you read the papers and hear people talking, what seems to be the most important thing in American life today?

XI

IS FAITH IN GOD PRACTICAL?

Confidence in God's Care

To Study in Advance

Matthew 6: 19-34; 10: 29-31; 11: 28-30.

Find the Following Facts

What Jesus said to do with money. (*Matthew 6: 19.*)

What Jesus said about trying to serve two masters. (*Matthew 6: 24.*)

What Jesus said about food and clothes. (*Matthew 6: 25.*)

What Jesus said to put first in life. (*Matthew 6: 33.*)

Jesus' counsel to those who worry. (*Matthew 6: 34; 10: 30, 31.*)

The invitation Jesus gives to all. (*Matthew 11: 28-30.*)

Problem

One of the best known men in England and America today is Dr. Wilfred T. Grenfell of the Labrador Mission. Athlete and scholar, as a young man he gave himself to Christ and threw his life into service on the bleak coast of Labrador. One winter day when he was "mushing" with his dogs over the lonely wastes of snow and ice to visit a sick patient the ice broke and threw him and his sledge of dogs into the ocean. The doctor succeeded in getting onto an ice-pan with a few of the dogs, but there was no way to reach the shore and the ice was drifting rapidly away from land, farther and farther in the open Atlantic. It was bitter cold. No one lived near; no one saw his accident. He was alone, with little or no prospect of escape.

Dr. Grenfell trusted in God. He had given his life to his service. He was a good man. The people of those little bleak villages needed him and his work was not com-

pleted. The doctor was a man of prayer, and he had a man's faith in the presence and power of his Father in his life.

Under these circumstances do you think that the Doctor might have expected God to save him? Suppose he had perished on the ice-pan, would that have meant that God did not care for him? Just what do you think we should feel about God's care for us?

America's Greatest Need

Ask people what they think is America's greatest need and you will be interested in their various answers. Try it and see. Some will say, "Greater trade facilities, more opportunity for expansion of our commerce." Others will tell you we need a better grade of politicians; more respect for law and order; rigid enforcement of the liquor laws. Some will answer that they think we need better relations between capital and labor; a better understanding between this country and other nations. And so they will answer you, telling you of the needs of America but not the *supreme* need, which is what you asked them.

Suppose you asked Jesus that question. What do you think he would say? I wonder if he would call attention to our wild scramble for money, such a feverish rush for it that the United States is today called money-mad. Perhaps he would notice that one out of every seven people in this country owns an automobile. Perhaps he would stop some Saturday evening on the Main Street of your town and ask where all the people were going. Then the next day he might drop into your church and ask where all the people had gone; not many of the crowds he saw the night before seem to be there. And then perhaps he would take the Bible as he did that Sabbath day in the synagogue at Nazareth and open it to the same passage in Isaiah. Can you imagine what his message would be? What does America need most?—"She needs God," he would reply. She needs to stop her wild race for money

and give God a place in her plans and purposes. She needs the presence of God in her cities and towns. She needs to develop in her people a sense of his presence, a desire to do his will, and confidence in his care.

How some folks would laugh at such a message. "Why," they would say, "we haven't time for such idealistic foolishness. It won't work. You can't make money that way. God looks out for those who look out for themselves." Others, I am sure, would take his words to heart. They are doing so now, and there is quietly growing throughout the country an earnest movement to take Jesus in earnest in *all* the affairs of life. To do so, means the overthrow of many entrenched wrongs. It will change our whole social and industrial system. It will sweep away national boundaries. The whole world will be one brotherhood, and *service*, not *profits* and *wealth*, will be the test of a person's worth. The young people of the world have pledged themselves to this new Christian order of life.

Life a Great Adventure

*The breaking waves dashed high
On a stern and rock-bound coast,
And the woods against a stormy sky
Their giant branches tossed,
And the heavy night hung dark
The hills and waters o'er,
When a band of exiles moored their bark
On the wild New England shore.
What sought they thus afar?
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?
They sought a faith's pure shrine!
Ay, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trod!
They have left unstained what there they found,—
Freedom to worship God.*

—FELICIA D. HEMANS.

We call them Pilgrims and so they were. They launched a great adventure in life when they embarked in the little Mayflower. It took faith to cross the stormy Atlantic, to make their homes in a strange wilderness, inhabited by wild beasts and savage peoples. Today we reap the fruits of their sowing. We have a free country because they believed in freedom and were willing to give their lives for it. Liberty of conscience, freedom to worship God, the rights of people to rule themselves—these are the basic principles on which our government rests. We owe these benefits to the Pilgrims and Puritans who were willing to venture for God.

All life is a venture of faith. Business rests on mutual confidence one in the other. We trust each other. Young people marry. They have faith in each other. He trusts her to be a home-maker and wonderful mother to their children. She trusts him to provide for her and their home. They have faith in themselves and confidence in God's care, even if they cannot see into the future. Every marriage is a venture of faith.

Without this challenge to faith, life would lose its zest. It would be tame and monotonous. Timid souls would not dare face their future. Life would be colorless and vapid. Now there is a tang to it; an urge in it that calls out the best in men and women. The need of faith makes life worth living.

Putting First Things First

Matthew 6: 19-34; 10: 29-31.

Treasure on earth, or treasure in heaven; serve Mammon or serve God; impossible to have treasure in both places; impossible to serve two masters. If you are going to serve Christ, do so; don't try to dissipate your life purposes and energies in other directions. Get life's perspective right and keep it so. Treasure on earth is fleeting. A storm, a fire, a bank failure, and it is gone. There is nothing permanent about it, and you cannot take it with you when

you die. Yet people fight and struggle; they waste life, sacrifice principles, and even betray friends to get riches. "Put my treasure first in your life," says Jesus. No one can take it from you. It is love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness,—such are the riches of the heart and they can be carried into the next world.

Look over the papers this week and see how far you think people are acting on Jesus' suggestion. Suppose everyone tried to practice Jesus' principle and really put the interests of the Kingdom of God first in their lives. What would happen in your town? Think this over seriously. Isn't it about time we began to take Jesus in earnest and gave his ideas a chance to work in the world?

Letting Christ Share Our Lives

Matthew 11: 28-30.

Someone has said that one and one make more than two. That two together can accomplish much more than two working alone. There is power in cooperation. The task is easier, the distance shorter, the burden lighter when we share it with another. Strange, then, isn't it, how folks try to carry the world on their shoulders like Atlas of old? How they strain and struggle. How important to them are their little affairs.

Sit down in some railroad station and watch the faces of those who pass. How tense they look. How hurried. How worried. Do you suppose they would look that way if they were letting Jesus share their lives with them? The yoke to which Jesus refers made the load easier to bear. It was not a badge of slavery, but an implement of service. Put it on this week with Christ and see how it works.

Try to pick out from your acquaintances those who seem to you to have some inner source of power. Talk with them about it. Jesus offers it to everyone, but he forces no one to take it. The great leaders and the steady, reliable, humble people everywhere know what Jesus

meant. Washington shared his burdens with God in Valley Forge. Lincoln found there his strength to carry the Union through the dark days of the Civil War. Grenfell was sustained by Him as he floated out to sea to certain death. We need to pause in our mad rush and take Christ into our thinking and doing. We have made wonderful inventions in the last twenty-five years, but machines are not the strength of a nation. Unless we develop our spiritual natures, our machines will destroy us. Everyone is saying this. Isn't it time someone began to put it into practice? Perhaps your class can begin to do so now. Why not talk over with your teacher a plan for a quiet hour each day for each member of the class?

Adrift on an Ice-Pan

"The wind was steadily driving me now toward the open sea, and I could expect, short of a miracle, nothing but death out there. Somehow, one scarcely felt justified in praying for a miracle. But we have learned down here to pray for things we want, and, anyhow, just at that moment the miracle occurred. The wind fell off suddenly, and came with a light air from the southward, and then dropped stark calm. The ice was now 'all abroad,' which I was sorry for, for there was a big safe pan not twenty yards away from me. If I could have got on that, I might have killed my dogs when the time came, and with their coats I could hope to hold out for two or three days more, and with the food and drink their bodies would offer me need not at least die of hunger or thirst. To tell the truth, they were so big and strong I was half afraid to tackle them with only a sheath-knife on my small and unstable raft.



"Our eternal life has always been with me a matter of faith. It seems to me one of those problems that must always be a mystery to knowledge. But my own faith in this matter had been so untroubled that it seemed now

almost natural to be leaving through this portal of death from an ice-pan. In many ways, also, I could see how a death of this kind might be of value to the particular work that I am engaged in. Except for my friends, I had nothing I could think of to regret whatever. Certainly I should like to have told them the story. But then one does not carry folios of paper in running shorts which have no pockets, and all my writing gear had gone by the board with the komatik.

"I could still see a testimonial to myself some distance away in my khaki overalls, which I had left on another pan in the struggle of the night before. They seemed a kind of company, and would possibly be picked up and suggest the true story. Running through my head all the time, quite unbidden, were the words of the old hymn:

*My God, my Father, while I stray
Far from my home on life's dark way,
Oh, teach me from my heart to say,
Thy will be done!*

It is a hymn we hardly ever sing out here, and it was an unconscious memory of my boyhood days.

"We all love life. I was glad to be back once more with possibly a new lease of it before me. I had learned on the pan many things, but chiefly that the one cause for regret, when we look back on a life which we think is closed forever, will be the fact that we have wasted its opportunities. As I went to sleep that first night there still rang in my ears the same verse of the old hymn which had been my companion on the ice, 'Thy will, not mine, O Lord.' "

—From *Adrift on an Ice-Pan*, by W. T. GRENFELL.
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Houghton Mifflin Company.

What Men of Faith Have Done

"We are talking about a man's faith, and that is not a fool's credulity. It is the faith of a red-blooded, normal human being. Faith is the power by which human beings

with limited capacities visualize the possibilities of what they hope for. They are all around us. Flagler was one. He visualized the future of Florida long before the boom in lots in Miami, and the men who are rich in Florida today are not the men who knew it all, and knew that Florida could be the world's playground. Half a dozen men went in on faith and bought lots, and when the others saw that they were making money, they tried to get in; and many of them got in too late and were left. That was because they waited till they knew. That's the story of the world everywhere. It is the same in every department of life. It does one good to read the letters of a man like Doctor Alexander Bell in which he says: 'Some day we shall actually be able to speak by telephone from office to office, and home to home, and city to city.' He was finding it hard to interest the men who 'knew it all,' the 'practical' men, the men who talk about faith's being 'sloshy stuff,' and piety's being good for old women, the men who would not put five cents into a venture that would have netted them five million dollars if they had had the faith. If I had only known what a share in the Ford business was going to give as a return for an investment, I would have had shares in the Ford business long ago. But I thought I knew, and so I did not go in on faith; and I lost out, as men are losing every day in the greatest of all ventures, the putting of their own hands into the hands of God Almighty in the faith that in that way only can they get the really worth-while returns of their little day on this planet.

"There are a thousand other examples. Think of old Ehrlich trying out chemical composition after chemical composition, because he wished to save the world from the curse of an almost invisible microbe called the spirochæte. It decimated humanity, and it cursed the world for centuries. Think of him trying out one after another until he got into the hundreds. It was six hundred and six before he got to one that gave him what he wanted. It is

men of faith who have saved the world, not men of knowledge."

* * * * *

"So I must end where I began. I am determined, God helping me, that no man shall rob me of my faith. I won't hide it away. I'll keep it right around with me, if I can. I will see it gets exercise. I will feed it all I can, so that it shall not starve. I won't force it if I can avoid it, and make it weedy and weakling. It shall say nothing it does not believe. When in real danger, if I can, I will go to someone stronger than I to help to keep it safe. But when that necessity arises, to whom shall I look for help? Surely, directly to Him who I believe gave it to me. For I know 'Whom I have trusted, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep it against that day.'"

—From *A Man's Faith*, by W. T. GRENFELL.
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TO A WATER-FOWL

Whither, 'midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far through their rosy depths dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly painted on the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed ocean-side?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast—
The desert and illimitable air—
Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
 At that far height, the cold thin atmosphere,
 Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
 Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end;
 Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
 And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,
 Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
 Hath swallowed up thy form; yet on my heart
 Deeply has sunk the lesson thou hast given,
 And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,
 Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight
 In the long way that I must tread alone,
 Will lead my steps aright.

—W. C. BRYANT.

Questions for Class Discussion

1. Years ago a mighty liner struck an iceberg in the Atlantic Ocean and sank with hundreds of people. The last that the survivors heard was the ship's band playing "Nearer, My God, to Thee." If God cares for people why does he allow such terrible calamities, such losses and sorrows?
2. Was Dr. Grenfell's rescue from the ice-pan an indication that God cared for him? Suppose he had perished at sea, could we have still felt that God cared for him? Is God's care limited or not?
3. Jesus taught us to put our trust in God's care. Yet he himself prayed to be saved from the cross, but nevertheless died on it. How can you reconcile that with God's care for him?
4. Worry and fear are the great foes of happy living. How can they be banished from a Christian's life?

5. Name some leaders in American life who seem to you to have trusted in God's care. How did they get their faith in God?
6. What do you think America needs most today?
7. If Jesus' teachings were taken in earnest, what would be the result: (1) in your church; (2) in your home; (3) in your school; (4) in your community? How can we begin?

To Think About Through the Week

How far do you think people should be governed by custom? What are social standards for? When are they good? When bad?

XII

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH SOCIAL CUSTOMS AND REGULATIONS WHICH WE DO NOT LIKE?

Jesus' Attitude Toward Religious and Social Customs

To Study in Advance

Matthew 6: 24; 6: 5-15; 6: 16-18; 15: 1-9; Luke 6: 1-11.

Find the Following Facts

1. What Jesus said a person should do when he made a gift. (*Matthew 6: 2-4.*)
2. The kind of praying Jesus condemned and the kind he commended. (*Matthew 6: 5-15.*)
3. How to carry out a religious ceremony. (*Matthew 6: 16-18.*)
4. Jesus' attitude toward "the traditions of the elders." (*Matthew 15: 1-9.*)
5. Jesus' teachings regarding the Sabbath. (*Luke 6: 1-11.*)

Problems

(1) Mother and father told Margaret that she was to be in the house by ten o'clock every night. Her brother Billy frequently comes in at midnight but nothing is said to him about it. He is a boy. Margaret says that if Billy stays out she ought to be allowed to do so. They are about the same age. Do you think that Margaret is right or not? Why should the boy be given privileges that are denied to the girl? Is this a social standard that should be changed?

(2) The subject of prayer was being discussed in a young people's Sunday evening group. One of the girls said that

when the minister prayed she closed her eyes out of respect for him, but that was all. His prayer didn't mean anything to her; she had no use for a spoken or audible prayer. What do you think of her objection? Is there danger of such prayers becoming mechanical? Can you suggest a change that Jesus might make in these prayers if he happened in unannounced some day?

(3) Pauline came home from her high school dance and vowed that she would never go to another. The fellows were too free with her. When she had objected, they told her that was what everybody did when they danced. Were they right or had Pauline got into the wrong crowd?

Carolyn came home from the same dance full of enthusiasm. She told her mother she had danced with only two or three fellows. Her mother knew them; they were the best fellows in the school. Carolyn said she never knew before how much real pleasure there was in dancing, and how fine it was to have the friendship of such boys.

What made Pauline disgusted with the dance? Why did Carolyn feel so differently about the same dance? Look over the next dance you have, and see if you think you can square it with the principles of Jesus. What can your group do to make the dance what it should be?

What Jesus Said About Praying and Giving

Matthew 6: 2-15.

Imagine, if you can, a man going down the streets of New York or Chicago or San Francisco blowing a trumpet and distributing handfuls of coin. What a crowd would follow him! Soon the officers would arrive and hustle him off to the police station, to be committed for disturbing the peace, or held for examination as to his sanity. We don't make our gifts that way today. Yet in Jesus' time the more publicly some folks could give a few coins to the poor the better it suited them. Such people were not interested in the poor and Jesus knew it. They loved

to have people praise them and they hoped to buy the people's favor in that way, and even get some returns from God for their generosity. It was hollow giving, a mere sham, and Jesus scorned it.

Do people give for the same reasons today? Some do; but most people do not. One of the largest givers to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology remained unknown for years. Another New York banker, who gave large sums of money to the Near East Relief and many other worthy objects, did it so quietly and privately that few people knew about it. On the other hand, a cheap politician will distribute favors and rewards and gifts where they will do *him* the most good.

Two kinds of giving. One gets its reward from the plaudits of the fickle crowd; the other finds a deeper and more lasting satisfaction in the knowledge of service rendered. As Lowell wrote:

*"Not what we give but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,
Himself, his hungry neighbor and Me."*

Give *in secret*; pray *in secret*. "That thine alms may be in secret"; "pray to thy Father who is in secret." This sums up Jesus' teaching on praying and giving. Why did he want these things done in secret? Perhaps you can find the answer if you will read again Matthew 6: 2-15 and see the outrageous hypocrisy he was attacking. "That they may have glory of men," "that they may be seen of men." That was the substance of the hypocrites' giving and praying. Do you suppose any people go to church today "to be seen of men"? Has it in any way become a custom and not real worship? Real religion, says Jesus, is something within, too sacred to be paraded before the eyes of the public, too genuine to be governed by wrong motives. The corners of the street where men prayed to be "seen of men" is no imaginary picture. Jesus had seen the Phari-

sees doing this many times a day, making a mockery of religion. How his earnest, genuine soul reacted against such religious twaddle! Read in *Luke 18:9-14* his story of the proud Pharisee and the humble Publican.

About Forms and Ceremonies

Matthew 6:16-18; 15:1-9.

Years ago New England set aside one day every year as a fast-day. It was originally intended to be a time for thought and self-denial, but as the years passed it became more and more an ordinary holiday and lost its significance. So it was given up. In Jesus' time fasting was one of the religious ceremonies which good Jews observed with strictness. It had its place and, rightly done, could be a help. Jesus himself fasted during the forty days in the wilderness just after his baptism. (*See Luke 4:2.*)

Like every good thing, fasting could be imitated and abused. Here, as in giving and praying, the desire "to be seen of men" was too great a temptation to some. So they would put on a sad face, disfigure themselves, clothe themselves in black clothes and throw ashes on their heads; and then sit in the streets where men could see them and think how very good they were. All this was repugnant to Jesus. He said, "When you fast, look happy, have a clean face. Be cheerful. Don't parade your virtues before men. Make your religion a genuine thing of the heart." Do you think there is danger today of our losing the meaning and value of some of the things the church does?

Then came those arch critics of Jesus who were forever hanging on the edges, making malicious suggestions about him, insinuating wrong motives, in every possible way counteracting the good he was doing. They were the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the Jews. They were bound to tradition, held fast by old precedents. Intensely conservative, they fought new ideas. The ancient Law, with the interpretations they had given to it, was the only

standard. Anyone who departed from it, or taught others to do so, was a dangerous man. So they feared and distrusted Jesus; and they watched him as a hawk watches an eagle.

"Why do your disciples break the teaching (the tradition) of the elders?" they asked Jesus. "Why don't they wash their hands before they eat?"

"Why do you break the commandment of God?" Jesus replied. And then he exposed their hypocrisy. "What right have you," he said, "to criticize my disciples for disregarding one of your traditions, when you yourselves break the laws of God himself?" There was no answer for them to make. And so they slunk away, "offended at him," the disciples reported. (*See verse 12.*)

Then Jesus explained his principle. (*See verses 13-20.*) There is no ceremonial defilement in eating with unwashed hands. Such matters are purely physical. The things of the soul are deeper. They are lodged in the mind and are expressed in the thoughts that come forth from it. Guard your thoughts. Keep them clean. That is what counts, not the ceremonial washing of plates and platters and hands.

The Sabbath in Galilee and America

Luke 6: 1-11.

The rabbis had surrounded the Jewish Sabbath with a mass of petty little laws. There were thirty-nine classes of actions that they prohibited on that day. Even tying a knot was forbidden. It was a negative, burdensome day; not a day for positive good and happiness. Jesus had no use for such exactions. He rebelled against them and refused to be bound by them. His was a free spirit, concerned with the realities of life, and not with its superficial forms and customs. Consequently he was constantly in conflict with the scribes and Pharisees.

The watchful Pharisees lodged another complaint that Sabbath when they saw the disciples plucking the grain

and rubbing it in their hands. Plucking was reaping, and reaping was forbidden by the rabbis on the Sabbath. Rubbing the ears of grain was the same as threshing, and threshing was forbidden on the Sabbath. "Why are you breaking our law?" they asked Jesus. And then he exposed again the insincerity and hollowness of their religion. King David, the household name in every Jewish home, the one whom all loved, ate even the communion bread when he was hungry, and gave it to his followers. "If he did that," said Jesus, "which was not lawful, and you do not condemn him, why do you criticize us for merely eating a few kernels of wheat from the field on the Sabbath?" There was no answer. The hypocrites had vanished.

Then Jesus explained the principle which should govern. The Sabbath was intended to be a day of rest from labor; a day of recreation and worship. It was intended to counteract the deadly effect of never-ending toil and the absorption in daily business and pleasures. The Sabbath was to be a means to an end, something for the good of the people, not an end in itself. So we find Jesus healing on the Sabbath, which was "not lawful." We find him everywhere helping others, teaching in the synagogue, dining in the house of some friend, making the Sabbath a day of uplift and helpfulness in every way. How would he tell us to use our Sunday in America?

The Revolutionary Jesus

Jesus was the great Trail Blazer. There are two "seeming" contradictions in him. He says, "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy but to fulfill" (*Matthew 5: 17*). He also says, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another" (*John 13: 34*). Then again, "Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also"

(Matthew 5: 38, 39). And also, "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you" (Matthew 5: 43, 44).

Jesus was a conserver and a revolutionary; a keeper of the old paths and yet a blazer of new trails. Here are some of the things he did:

(1) He shocked the religious leaders of his day because he plucked and ate the grain as he passed through the field on the Sabbath.

(2) He shocked the tradition lovers by eating without first making sure the dishes were ceremonially clean.

(3) He overthrew the man-made laws of the Sabbath by healing a woman on the Sabbath and comparing her value to that of an ox or an ass fallen into a pit.

(4) He disregarded the social conventions by eating with publicans and sinners and by conversing with a Samaritan woman.

(5) He attacked corrupt interests by overthrowing the tables of the money changers in the temple and driving them outside its walls.

(6) He chose death rather than recant the truth he preached.

Notice that Jesus never overthrew anything that was worth keeping and he did not attack a thing just for the sake of attacking it. He never pulled something down without putting something better in its place. There are two factors which underlie all progress. One is the conservation of the best and the building on the old. The other is the combination of vision, imagination and courage to strike out in new paths. This trail leads through trial, pain, persecution and toil. It may bring misunderstanding, ridicule, misrepresentation and unpopularity. Yet the great souls of the earth who have really accomplished things in the world have been those who have been willing to follow in the path of Jesus and strike out new trails with him as their Guide.

Questions for Class Discussion

1. What is the best use we can make of Sunday? What principle shall determine our use of that day?
2. Martin Luther said, "Ideally there should be no distinction between days, but human nature requires a day of rest from labor; the same demands leisure for joint worship; therefore a day must be fixed for all. We cannot do better than follow the tradition which sets apart the first day of the week." What do you think of Luther's statement? Shall our Sunday be just like every other day or not? If not, how different shall it be?
3. Suppose we apply the principle of *perspective* to the Sunday question. What shall we put first in that day? What will be subordinated?
4. Jesus overthrew many of the cherished traditions of the religious leaders of his day. Why did he do so? Can you suggest a principle that governed his attitude toward them?
5. If you don't believe a law is good, what two things can you do with it? What is the danger of breaking it? Why is it better to try by lawful methods to have it abolished or modified?
6. What do you think of Margaret's complaint? (*See problem at head of the lesson.*) Are the standards for girls unfair as compared to those for boys? Why should Margaret be in at ten o'clock? Why should Billy be allowed to stay out until midnight if he wants to do so? Can your group suggest ways in which there can be one standard for both girls and boys? What standard shall it be?
7. What was Jesus' feeling toward the sham religion of his day? Toward forms and ceremonies? When may they be helpful? When are they harmful? What about the minister's prayer? The prayers at your

young people's meeting? How can you make them real and not a mere form?

8. Shall we have an open mind in religion or accept things as they are and hold that all religious thought is settled?
9. Pauline and Carolyn each had her opinion of that high school dance. (*See problem at beginning of lesson.*) What made Pauline so angry? Had she a right to be? Whose fault was it, hers or the fellows? Why did Carolyn find the same dance so pleasant? Is dancing bad, or the way you dance? Suggest ways to make it square up with the teachings of Jesus. Do you think he would dance our modern dances?
10. Shall we abolish all the old sanctions that society has raised for the protection of itself, such as chaperones, and have the same freedom for girls as for boys?
11. Discuss social customs and standards in your school and community which your group can change for the better. What new trails will you blaze in the town and in your school and in the church? What should be the purpose, the objective in blazing a new trail,—honor, fame, personal success, or service? What was the motive in the life of Jesus?

To Think Over Through the Week

Look back over history and bring to the class some great struggle for human rights that was finally successful. Try to find how long it took to accomplish it.

XIII

WILL THE RIGHT ALWAYS TRIUMPH?

Jesus' Confidence in the Ultimate Triumph of Good

To Study in Advance

Matthew 6: 19-34; 10: 5-11: 19; 13: 24-33; Luke 12: 31, 32; John 14: 1-31.

Find the Following Facts

The lesson Jesus taught from God's care of the birds and flowers. (*Matthew 6: 19-34.*)

Jesus' counsel to the twelve disciples. (*Matt. 10: 5-33.*)

The cost of serving Christ. (*Matthew 10: 34-39.*)

Jesus' message to John. (*Matthew 11: 2-6.*)

Three parables of the kingdom of heaven and what they teach. (*Matthew 13: 24-33.*)

What Jesus placed first in life. (*Luke 12: 31, 32.*)

The farewell message of Jesus and its most helpful words. (*John 14: 1-31.*)

Problem

In the darkest days of the World War when the Allies were forced back on their last line of defense I often heard people say, "If the Germans win, I shall lose all confidence in the power of right. I will no longer believe that truth prevails." These people felt that the right must win the war. Do you agree with them? What does history teach us about this problem?

Other people say that "God is on the side of the heaviest battalions." What do they mean? What light does the past throw on such a statement?

Think over both of these views and then ask yourself whether right makes might, and if so how it works. Does it always win on the battlefield or by other and perhaps slower processes, through the change of attitudes in people after long years? Illustrate this by the abolition of slavery in England and the United States.

A Look Backward

The best way to get into the spirit of this lesson is to go back over the twelve preceding ones. In them you have followed the high points in Jesus' life from his birth to the closing days of his great ministry in Galilee. Use your imagination and try to relive the events and teachings through which we have come with Jesus. See him in his home in Nazareth, the oldest boy in a large and poor family. Recall what his education was and how he got it. Remember again those hills around Nazareth where he loved to go at evening and on the Sabbath. See him walking along with the slow-moving caravans as they passed on their journeys from afar, a keen-eyed, quick-witted boy, hearing the news of the traders and learning the strange ways of other peoples. He was what today we call "a good mixer" and so in later life we find him mingling with all classes of people in his efforts to help them.

See Jesus in the temple at Jerusalem at twelve years of age. Just a brief glimpse of him and then one verse in the Bible telling of his fourfold development,—strong in body, keen in mind, popular with people, and loved by God. These were the years of preparation for his later life. They correspond to our years from birth to about twenty-five. Then we lay our foundations. Can you find in lessons one to three some suggestions of where Jesus got the poise and power he showed in later life?

From the baptism and the battle in the wilderness Jesus came forth with a power of the spirit that people at once felt. In that energy and zeal he swept all before him. Enthusiasm among his followers ran high. Crowds thronged him wherever he went. It seemed as if there were no limits to what he could do. Success crowned his work. And rumor spread and grew that at last the long-expected Messiah had come, until one day the mob tried by force to make him their king, just as centuries before they had hailed the youthful David as King of Israel. This, you remember, was a serious crisis in Jesus' life. He

could be the wonder-working Messiah that he was tempted to be in the wilderness. He could have the crowds at his feet, and again restore to the Jews their lost prestige and glory. It was a dazzling prospect, but he rejected it firmly and quickly. His kingdom was not an earthly one. He would be king over the hearts of men and in no other way. From that time, his popularity decreased. Many of his followers left him. The power of his enemies grew and they harassed him at every turn. Only a few of the faithful remained. These he began to train in his teachings and works, hoping they would catch this spirit, and understand his purpose and program. With these events in his mind, turn now to today's lesson. How could he be so serene and confident? What right had he to look forward so hopefully to the final triumph of his teachings? Think it over. Study the Bible passages and see if you can find Jesus' secret.

Jesus' Secret of Power

Matthew 6: 19-34; 10: 5-11: 19; Luke 12: 31, 32; John 14: 1-31.

Certain key-words stand out in these counsels of Jesus to his followers. They suggest the secret of his own strength and poise. They are: (1) "*Fear not.*" Over and over he tells the disciples not to be afraid. The Father is over all. He sees and knows. "*Cast out fear,*" said Jesus. It has no place in a true believer in God. (2) "*Do not worry,*" or "*take no anxious thought.*" Don't waste life in worrying about non-essentials. There is only one supreme concern, that is, the things of the spirit. Put those first in your lives and all the rest will adjust themselves. On the last night with his twelve disciples, he began and ended his farewell talk with the words, "*Let not your heart be troubled.*" And his own crucifixion was only a few hours away. Try to look within the mind of Jesus at that time. Apparently not concerned for himself, but eager to give them every help and comfort. Yet he knew that he must leave his work in their hands and he realized how poorly they

understood him and his teachings. It takes marvelous faith in people and in truth to keep serene in the face of such a prospect. It all comes down to the counsel, simple to understand but so hard to practice—*trust God*. He is your Father. He cares more for you than you realize. He is wise, patient, understanding, sympathetic, loving. Put your lives in his keeping, and go ahead with peace and joy, trying to do his will in the world. That was Jesus' secret of power. He has shown us the way. Can we follow it?

The Slow but Sure Triumph of Good

Matthew 13: 24-33.

Will good triumph over evil? Will the right prevail over wrong? When and how? Find Jesus' answers to these questions in the three parables given in *Matthew 13: 24-33.*

(1) *The parable of the wheat and tares (verses 24-30)* answers the question why evil prevails. If God knows it, why doesn't he destroy it? It makes trouble for good. It hinders its growth. Why not have a world in which there is no evil? In Jesus' story he shows that finally good will prevail and the evil be destroyed. This will be at the harvest, but when that time is, he does not say. What tares have been destroyed in the world since he came? Think them over and be ready to discuss them in the class. Perhaps there are some tares that your group can root out of your town.

(2) *The parable of the mustard seed (verses 31, 32).* Will truth prevail? Will Jesus' kingdom become great? From that little handful of followers until it now numbers millions all over the world—there is the story of the tiny little seed grown into the large mustard tree. Already we see Jesus' faith vindicated.

(3) *The parable of the leaven (verse 33).* How will the truth triumph? Through armies? With pomp and noise and numbers? Not so, but by the quiet power of its own worth. Just as yeast slowly but surely and quietly permeates the dough until it is all raised, so truth diffuses

through the world. Nothing can stop it; impossible to keep it down.

What a confident outlook Jesus had on the future of his kingdom. Not a question in his mind that truth will prevail. Patiently, persistently he carried forward his work in that spirit, and today we see how wonderfully his faith has been justified. Lowell caught something of this confidence when he wrote:

*"Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne,—
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
And behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow
Keeping watch above his own."*

What Great Leaders and Poets Say

"The Almighty has his own purposes. Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh. If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through his appointed time, he now wills to remove, and that he gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

—From the Second Inaugural Address of ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

THE ETERNAL GOODNESS

*I see the wrong that round me lies,
I feel the guilt within;
I hear, with groan and travail-cries,
The world confess its sin.*

*Yet, in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed stake my spirit clings;
I know that God is good!*

*Not mine to look where cherubim
And seraphs may not see,
But nothing can be good in Him
Which evil is in me.*

*The wrong that pains my soul below
I dare not throne above;
I know not of His hate,—I know
His goodness and His love.*

*I dimly guess from blessings known
Of greater out of sight,
And with the chastened Psalmist, own
His judgments, too, are right.*

*I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.*

*I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.*

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

Questions for Class Discussion

1. Taking Jesus in earnest, what is the way to find the secret of the poise and power he had? Can it be done or is it impossible? Living as he counselled his followers to do, what changes in our modern life would result?

2. How could Jesus be so confident of the future when the present looked so dark? Do you think it was a miraculous power that he had or something that everyone can have even if in lesser degree?
3. Tell the story of man's struggle for freedom. Trace it through the days of feudalism. How long did it take to overthrow that system? Why is progress upward so hard and slow? Are there advantages to be gained in that way that might be lost if truth had an easy time?
4. We fought the Great War to "make the world safe for democracy." A number of kings and autocrats were put out of business, but since the war there has been a reaction. Do you know how many dictators are now in power in the world today? (*Look this up. You will find it very suggestive.*) What can we do to bring to everyone the justice and love and right treatment that should prevail where Jesus' teachings are believed and practiced?
5. What do the parables of the mustard seed and leaven teach? What light on the presence of evil in the world do you find in the parable of the wheat and tares?
6. If Germany had won the war do you think people would have been justified in saying that might makes right, and not right makes might? Does history show that truth always prevails or not? Give some illustration to prove your point.
7. How long did it take to abolish slavery from America? What do you think of Lincoln's statement about it quoted above? Why did it take so long for men to recognize the rights of others? Suppose everyone took Jesus' teaching as true that all of us are God's children and therefore brothers, how would we treat each other? How would we treat England and France and Germany Japan and Italy?
8. What is the most helpful teaching of Jesus in the thirteen lessons of this textbook?



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